CMR

COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW



Media Democracy

The Journal of the Alliance for Community Media • Volume 21, No. 1

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Alliance for Community Media

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A Free Flow of Ideas, Education and Opportunity

by Bunnie Riedel
Executive Director, Alliance for Community Media

Greetings!

This is my first submission to Community Media Review as the new Executive Director of the Alliance. Let me begin by saying how thrilled I am to be serving the Alliance and how excited I am by the work that is being done in communities across this country. The work of the national office of the Alliance is about working with you so you can better serve the needs of your communities.

On my fourth day in this position I went to the Central States Regional Conference in Columbus, Ohio. At the conference I was able to sit down with various people representing different centers and learn about what they were accomplishing, and I was amazed! Three examples stand out in my mind:

1) Computer centers being established in inner-city neighborhoods to give access to low income children and assist in welfare-to-work job skills training.

2) High school students being taught all phases of television program production. These teenagers are being challenged to stretch their creativity, work cooperatively with each other and become active participants in media rather than just passive recipients.

3) Televised "Town Hall" forums in which all the candidates for public office were invited to present their platforms, answer callers and make the case for their election. This was not the typical eight-second sound bites or the slick political messages we normally see during elections—this was real interaction so that voters could make informed decisions about who to vote for. One center conducted 91 half-hour interviews with the candidates in their area.

Over the last few weeks, as I've run into acquaintances of mine who work on social justice and democracy issues, I've been telling them these stories. I can visibly see their eyes "lighting up" as they realize the impact of what I'm telling them. Many of these friends are seasoned grassroots organizers who believe in equity for all people and free speech—they believe in access to all kinds of things—but they haven't really explored how electronic access may drive the social justice issues of the new millennium. If you think that's overstated, think of the printing press. Before its invention, philosophical, theological and political discourse were limited to the elite few—those who could afford personal scribes or the institutions which maintained private libraries (such as the church or the monarchy). With the advent of the printing press, information began to be rapidly duplicated and disseminated among the masses. And with that flow of information came dynamic new ways of thinking, movements for democracy, justice and even revolution.

The three above examples of work being done in access centers highlights the reality that our communications movement is not just about technical production—it is about the free flow of ideas, education and opportunity.

The child living in the inner city may not be able to hop a plane and visit Greece, but that child can hop the internet and visit the world in an instant. The welfare recipient may not be able to afford classes or equipment in order to make themselves computer literate and more marketable for a better paying job, but they can gain that knowledge and those skills at access centers. The high school student discovers talent that he/she did not know they had and in the process builds confidence and self-esteem. The voter can make a more informed decision about a candidate because they've heard the candidate speak in his/her own words, rather than through the filtering of a high-priced public relations campaign.

As a life-long organizer, I have long struggled with trying to figure out all the various ways I could communicate with the "grassroots" more effectively—especially given the budget restraints most non-profits work under. The technical developments of last few years have dramatically changed the potential for organizing activists, creating a ground swell and maximizing political leverage. These developments guarantee that all kinds of messages can be heard, not just the messages of those most able to pay or those most likely to be connected. They guarantee that public discourse will be expanded, not contracted. And they guarantee that our democracy will be protected.

I don't need to tell Alliance members the importance of promoting access to electronic media—Alliance members already comprehend what that struggle is about. But there is no doubt that we need to make ourselves heard and seen throughout the public square. We need to educate others as to how access affects their everyday lives.

Sometimes I imagine what life would be like if I couldn't read or did not have access to books, magazines or newspapers. I think about how much I would miss—important health information, news of the day, my favorite fiction, philosophical and religious writings, interesting recipes and my favorite comics, biographical and historical accounts, and the list goes on. If it had not been for the invention of the printing press, I never would have read Euripides, Shakespeare, Thoreau, Lillian Hellman, Betty Friedan or Martin Luther King Jr.

The electronic medium used by the Alliance membership is as important, influential and world changing as the printing press, for both the originator and the recipient. It informs, educates, entertains, inspires, stimulates and invites participation.

I am excited and proud to be working with the people who make media access happen in their communities. This issue is at the heart of where social justice and democracy movements will find themselves over the next few years. The health and well-being of access will be a harbinger for the health and well-being of our communities as a whole. I already know that the access community intends to leave no person behind in its quest for media democracy. I pledge to do everything I can to promote the good work of the Alliance members and mission of the Alliance for Community Media.

CMR Editorial Board Names New Members

The Alliance for Community Media's national board has appointed Autumn Labbe-Renault and Dr. Charles Williams to the CMR Editorial Board.

Labbe-Renault is assistant director at Davis Community Television in California, responsible for day to day operations at the center. She brings more than 10 years experience as a writer, editor and publisher with magazine and publishing companies in California.

Williams is professor of Developmental Studies at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. He has served on other editorial and newsletter boards and founded the Journal for the Ohio Association for Developmental Studies. He is currently chair of the board of Dayton Access Television.

The editorial board will meet at the Alliance national conference in Portland, Oregon on Wednesday, July 8 and Thurs-day, July 9. Alliance members are invited to attend.

Managing Editor

Tim Goodwin has been named managing editor of *Community Media Review*, a position he previously held from 1991-1994.

He recently returned from Russia, where he lived and worked in Nizhny Novgorod as a Peace Corps volunteer in business development from 1994 to 1997.

ACD Annual Meeting Set for National Conference

Alliance for Community Media members are invited to attend the annual meeting of the Alliance for Communications Democracy, which will be held Friday, July 10, 12:30 – 1:45 in the Studio Suite at the Alliance's national conference in Portland.

Community Television Across the Globe

An extensive sive web site for information about community or public access television worldwide is now available at **www.openchannel.se**

▲ what is access television?

▲ international overview

▲ links to 200 access tv sites (The Global Village CAT)

▲ links to documents, lectures and conferences

▲ Open Channels for Europe

▲ and to other sites dedicated to the freedom of speech.

Alliance Names New Executive Director

The Alliance for Community Media has announced the hiring of Bunnie Riedel as its new Executive Director.

"Bunnie Riedel has a long history of success in bringing diverse groups together to achieve public interest goals," said Alan Bushong, Chair of the Alliance's Board of Directors. "We are thrilled to be gaining an executive director with so much experience building national organizations."

Riedel has extensive experience with nonprofit management and constitutional issues advocacy. As the former Field Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Riedel trained hundreds of volunteers and community activists. She facilitated a dynamic grassroots movement that included the formation of 40 chapters, a national clergy and activist network, and extensive congregational outreach.

Prior to that position, she was the founding executive director of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Southern California where she brought together more than 500 Clergy for Choice and was elected chair of the Greater Los Angeles Coalition for Reproductive Freedom. In 1993, she received a "Recognition for Leadership" from the California State Senate.

One of Riedel's first endeavors as executive director will be to provide leadership in launching the Alliance's Campaign for Media Democracy, a series of grassroots initiatives aimed at strengthening public awareness of community media and placing greater control of electronic media in the hands of local communities.

"Public space advocates working in community television, community radio and community computer networks are challenged by increasing corporate mergers and the marginalization of public communication outlets." Bushong said. "Bunnie Riedel's track record of activism will serve us well as we organize at the local, state and national levels."

Please note Bunnie Riedel's debut column on preceding page.

Up and coming

July 8 - 11 – Alliance for Community Media, 1998 National Conference, "Community Media: From Vision To Action," Portland, OR.

September 8-13 – National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, 18th Annual Conference, San Diego, CA.

October 15-17 – Central States Regional Fall Conference, Midland, MI

October 22-24 – Far West Regional Conference, "Harness the Power, Liberate Your Mind," Reno, NV.

Useful Web reference links

Gary White, assistant manager at Wheaton Community Television, has compiled a reference list of of useful web technique/development sites. Some are good references on design and style, others cover a variety of different web issues.

Worth checking out if you're building your web site.

Java Programming Resources
http://www.apl.jhu.edu/~hall/java/

WebReference.com
www.webreference.com

Hot Wired:WebMonkey
http://www.hotwired.com/webmonkey/

Java Development Kit
http://www.download.com/PC/Result/TitleDetail/0,4,0-16712-g,501000.html

Building Online Communities
http://www.cnet.com/Content/Builder/Business/Community/

Internet Guides and Tutorials
http://lcweb.loc.gov/global/internet/training.html

Guide to Electronic Publishing
http://www.igc.org/igc/help/www/epub.html

Yale Style Manual
http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/contents.html

Web Programming and Scripting
http://www.cnet.com/Content/Builder/Programming/

Web Authoring/Cascading Style Sheets
http://www.cnet.com/Content/Builder/Authoring/CSS/?dd

Sun's Guide to Style
http://www.sun.com/styleguide/

Design Links
http://www.zender.com/designers-guide-net/eir/dr.html

ZDNet Web info
http://www5.zdnet.com/products/internetuser.html

Cnet's article from Dan Schaeffer on User Interface
http://www.cnet.com/Content/Builder/Graphics/Shafer/102797/?st.bl.graph5.mbcol

Microsoft Office Getting Results pages
http://www.microsoft.com/officereference/gettingresults/CONT1.HTM for those PC users.

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Media Democracy

From the Editors

Welcome to another issue of the *Community Media Review*. The theme of this issue is **Media Democracy**. Its publication coincides with the launching of the Alliance for Community Media's new organizing initiative, *The Campaign for Media Democracy*.

The Alliance is part of a continuing struggle for justice. In an era of corporate domination of communication, community media is an essential flame of justice against the long night of commercialism. In planning this issue we had two goals: to convey the urgency for community media activists, advocates, and practitioners to nurture and grow the field; and to provide tools for that job.

Zoom Out – The Big Picture

In addressing the first goal, Alliance board chairman **Alan Bushong** offers a perspective on the road ahead for ACM. Media analyst **Bob McChesney** inspired us with his keynote address at the 1997 ACM conference. He does it again here with a piece on the alarming trends in the media industry and their implications for democracy. CMR co-editor **Todd Samusson** addresses some strategic concerns in presenting the case for the *Campaign for Media Democracy*.

Zoom In – Tools You Can Use

Moving to a more hands-on vein we've included an article by **Ginny Berkowitz** and **Susan Fleischmann** on how community media centers can build partnerships with other organizations. Long-time Alliance supporter **Sue Buske** provides timely assistance demystifying the difficult process of cable franchise renewal. CMR co-editor **Kate Hiller** tells the story of how Access Tucson organized their community for the franchise renewal process. Media activist **Linda Iannacone** reports on the creative efforts of the New York Free the Media Alliance to raise issues of media control with the *Media Mogul World Tour* actions in New York last year. **Dorothy Todd Hénaut**, a pioneer of the community media movement, provides perspectives on how to build the value of your media center with a look at the training/mentoring methods behind the historic *Challenge for Change* project. Alliance Public Policy chair **Rob Brading** provides a report on the move of access advocacy from the federal to the state level and ways to organize for that effort. **Paula Manley** explores the importance of building leadership within your organization, your community, and the community media field, and offers a report from the Community Media Leadership Institute. Finally there's a helpful article on how to write to public officials reprinted from the **20/20 Vision** organization.

It's an honor to offer this issue of CMR. If you find these stories helpful, feel free to make reprints, or post anything on websites. May you always find community in your life and your work,

Todd Samusson & Kate Hiller
(a.k.a. The Sam Hill Committee)
Co-Editors, Community Media Review

Community Media: The Next Twenty Years

by Alan Bushong
Alliance Chairman and Executive Director, Capital Community Television

Public access television grew out of three great movements of the 1960s: civil rights, equal rights for women, and opposition to the Vietnam War. Two other movements—environmental and anti-nuclear—which arose in the 1970s, added to the number of people dissatisfied with their inability to get their message across via the commercial, corporate media. People who were traditionally under-, mis- or totally unrepresented clamored for self-representation in a place that counted: the electronic media that reached the homes of nearly all Americans and that were increasingly shaping thought and culture.

Hard Work Brings Results

With hard work and organizing, early community media activists overcame the odds and succeeded. The growth of cable television with unused channel capacity, development of relatively inexpensive industrial television equipment and a progressive FCC led to minimal requirements for public access in the early 1970s. By the time the courts eliminated a federal mandate for such requirements, public access became a prime bidding feature as giant corporations bid for local cable systems. Congress validated the right of local communities to require access channels and capital funding in the 1984 Cable Act.

The movements which led to community media were based on building community and placing people on equal footing. None were about the accumulation of great fortunes. Equal opportunity and justice characterize civil rights and equal rights for women. The anti-war movement combined pacifism with opposition to forced service via the draft in the army. The anti-nuclear and environmental movements were based on limiting the environmentally damaging effects caused by people, even if such limits cost money to implement.

A Shift of Movements: Benefits for Individuals and Wealth

The movements of today look very different. Privatization—the attack on all forms of public space and activity—is the dominant movement. Individual land owner privileges are related to privatization. The pro-life movement has grown in opposition to the pro-choice movement, an offshoot of equal rights for women. A movement to deny civil rights to gays and lesbians has also grown. The latter two movements have increased confrontation, reduced civility in public discourse, often stopping discourse altogether. It's tough to build community in such conditions.

Particularly difficult for community media advocates is the attack on public space. Community media depends on the presence of public space in electronic communications. Yet how safe is our community media environment if public schools and public transportation can't get funding, public welfare is scorned, public forests are harvested by private lumber companies and public lands are being sold?

The individual-based movement has fostered open talk of privatizing the IRS, whose sole function is to collect public funds—or taxes—to pay for public work. While the IRS has few friends, a privatized version, dominated by the interests of larger tax payers would be disastrous. With a private IRS, we could expect a "downward shift" of the tax burden to us and an accompanying windfall gift to corporations and the wealthy.

If all else is privatized around us, on what basis do we defend public space in electronic media?

While each of the community-building movements has made progress, a portion of that progress is lasting. Sadly, each failed either to accomplish its goal or to maintain steady progress. Cornel West, Professor of Afro-American Studies and Theology at Harvard, maintains that the Black Middle Class increased during the 1960s and '70s, but that reverse discrimination suits of the late 1970s stifled these economic gains. More importantly, Dr. Martin Luther King's plans to unite the poor—regardless of color—was shattered by his murder.

Women also made progress. The earnings ratio of 50-some cents on the dollar rose to 74 cents on the dollar, and women have made gains in becoming decision-makers. Still, apologists claim women are paid less because there is more competition for the jobs they take. Women with a dozen years of experience in young child education make barely minimum wage, while young men with no more education make triple that amount programming games on CD-ROM. Meanwhile, domestic violence runs rampant and one-third of all women are sexually assaulted. In a country with more women than men, women hold minuscule numbers in the Senate and House.

The anti-war movement may have been substantially responsible for the elimination of the draft, but mechanized warfare may have a greater claim. The censorship of news during the Gulf War is a sobering view of how little we know about or can influence our foreign policy when it comes to military action.

Aided by undefendable costs, the anti-nuclear movement had some success in preventing new nuclear plant construction. The environmental movement can claim gains in recycling and some reduction in the use of plastics and non-biodegradable materials. Yet, when an issue is defined as environmental preservation versus jobs, the environment is generally runner-up.

The same can be said for community media. Some communities have made spectacular gains, and nationwide, more than 20,000 hours of new programs are produced each week. Yet the dirty deal of the 1984 Cable Act endangers media centers across the nation. In that act, local governments gave up rate regulation and PEG access operating funds; in return they got the potential to guarantee unrestricted use of a 5% franchise fee. As franchises come up for renewal we may find ourselves losing much.

Community-Building Organizations

We need to actively team up with those groups involved in community-building movements and those who work to preserve public spaces. Otherwise, our days are numbered. If all else is privatized around us, on what basis do we defend

See NEXT 20 YEARS – page 28

BIG

THE CONSOLIDATION OF CORPORATE MEDIA

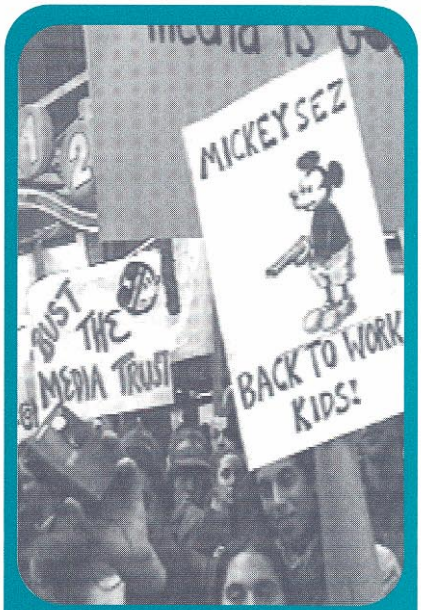
by Robert W. McChesney

There are three striking features of the U.S. media system in the 1990s: concentration, conglomeration, and hyper-commercialism. Each of these is a long-term phenomenon accelerating throughout the 1990s that will likely continue well into the digital age. This astonishing degree of concentrated corporate control over the media is, in part, a response to the rapid increase in channels wrought by cable and satellite television. In this sense the corporate media giants are having a trial run for how they might dominate the Internet when it converges with digital television.

The conglomeration of media ownership began in recent decades. Media firms began to have major holdings in two or more distinct sectors, such as book publishing, recorded music, and broadcasting. This was fueled by a desire to create an extremely lucrative "vertical integration," where media firms not only produce content but also own the distribution channels guaranteeing places to display and market their wares.

Currently, a major form of vertical integration is the combining of film and television production with the ownership of cable channels, broadcast networks and stations, and movie theaters. We now are seeing the practice of "branding": cross-promoting and cross-selling media properties or "brands" across numerous sectors of the media that were not previsously linked. Hence, if a media conglomerate had a successful motion picture, it could promote the film on its broadcast properties and then use the film to spin off television programs, musical CDs, books, and other merchandise. In the new world order of conglomerated media, the profit whole can be vastly greater than the sum of the profit parts. This process is often called "synergy." Ironically, the conversion of all media to a digital format has the effect not of putting an "iceberg" before the corporate media giants but, rather, making it easier and more profitable for them to work in several media sectors at once.

A look at Disney's recent operations shows how a media conglomerate attempts to employ synergy. Its *Home Improvement* show is a big hit on its ABC television network. So Disney then has *Home Improvement* star Tim Allen take roles in Disney movies and write for Disney's publishing firms. The other giant media conglomerates are increasingly emulating this pattern. In another example, Disney takes it lucrative ESPN cable channel and uses the name to generate other properties. In 1998 Disney launched *ESPN Magazine* to compete directly with Time Warner's *Sports Illustrated*. Likewise, Disney is launching a chain of ESPN Grill restaurants to appeal to those who wish to combine sports with dining out.



'We are in the midst of what is little short of the commercial carpet-bombing of our culture.'

If synergy makes becoming a media conglomerate more profitable and, indeed, mandatory, the other side of the coin is "branding." Media firms are racing to give their media properties distinct brand identities. Although the media system has fewer and fewer owners, it has a plethora of channels competing for attention. Branding is the primary means of attracting and keeping audiences while also offering new commercial possibilities. Cable channels and even broadcast networks each strive to be regarded as brands by the specific demographic groups desired by advertisers. Hence, Viacom's Nickelodeon cable network battles its new competition from News Corp.'s Fox Kids Network and the Disney Channel by incessantly hammering home the Nickelodeon brand name on Nickelodeon, and in its other film, television, and publishing holdings. An example of the rise of branding to preeminence as a business strategy is News Corp.'s HarperCollins book publishing division. In the past few years, HarperCollins has developed *The Little House on the Prairie* from the 1930s and 1940s into a contemporary book series aimed at 8-12 year olds, and has added several new books to the series. HarperCollins has also generated ninety related products, from paper dolls and cookbooks to picture books, all bearing the "Little House" logo.

The degree and pace of market concentration and conglomeration over the past 20 years is little short of breathtaking. In 1983, the first edition of Ben Bagdikian's seminal book, *The Media Monopoly*, chronicled how 50 firms dominated U.S. mass media, from newspapers, books, and magazines to film, radio, television, cable, and recorded music. In each of the four subsequent editions of the book, mergers and acquisitions reduced the number of dominant firms, until the 1997 edition put the figure at around 10, with another dozen or so firms rounding out the system. The 1990s have seen an acceleration of this

process. The largest U.S. and global media firms like Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation have all doubled or tripled in size, through major acquisitions of other media firms as well as internal growth of existing assets. These firms have benefited from the relaxed regulatory standards in this era of "free market" capitalism, from new technologies that make consolidation more feasible and, especially from the immense profit potential that comes with size. There no longer exists the option of being a small or middle-sized media firm: a firm either gets larger through mergers and acquisitions or it gets swallowed by a more aggressive competitor.

But concentrating upon specific media sectors fails to convey the extent of concentrated corporate control, and the corporate media sector's linkage to the command posts of the capitalist economy. An inkling of this emerges when one addresses the holdings of the largest media corporations. Nearly all of the dominant firms in each of the major media sectors are owned outright or in part by the 20 largest U.S media firms, and among those firms the largest half-dozen rule the roost. Time Warner, the world's largest media firm with 1997 sales of around $25 billion, has holdings that rank it among the top few firms in film production, TV show production, cable systems, cable TV stations, broadcast TV networks, magazine publishing, book publishing, recorded music, amusement parks, and movie theaters. The other giants—Disney, Viacom, News Corporation, General Electric's NBC, TCI, Seagram's Universal Studios, CBS, and Sony—all have, or are in the process of building, similar arsenals. NBC, for example, is known to be interested in acquiring a film studio, while even giant Time Warner is rumored to be in the market for a major television network. As one media analyst puts it, "consolidation among distribution and content players rages on."

This is not exactly the sort of blind, unfettered competitive market invoked by the likes of Jack Kemp. The leading media CEOs all meet annually at an invitation-only retreat in Idaho to discuss the future of their industry. Regardless of what actually happens in Idaho, these interactions bear many of the earmarks of a cartel, or at least a

> *'there no longer exists the option of being a small or middle-sized media firm'*

"gentleman's club." And this barely begins to indicate how noncompetitive the media market is becoming. In addition to their oligopolistic market structure and overlapping ownership, the media giants each employ equity joint ventures with their "competitors" to an extraordinary extent. These are media projects where two or more media giants share the ownership between them. They are ideal because they spread the risk of a venture and eliminate the threat of competition by teaming up with potential adversaries. Each of the eight largest U.S. media firms have, on average, joint ventures (often more than one) with five of the other seven media giants. Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. has at least one joint venture with every single one of them. While competition can be fierce in specific markets, the same firms are often the best customers for each other's products, and the overall effect is to reduce competition and carve up the media pie to the benefit of the handful of giants. According to most known theories of market performance, this degree of collaboration can only have negative consequences for consumers.

Looking at the membership on the U.S. media giants' boards of directors—the people who run the companies—the notion of this being a collaborative industry seems that much greater. Crawford's select six, less the Japanese Sony and adding CBS, have 81 directors on their boards. These 81 hold 104 additional directorships on the boards of Fortune 1000 corporations. Indeed, the boards for these six firms plus the five largest newspaper corporations (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Times Mirror, Gannett, and Knight-Ridder) have directors who also serve on 144 of the Fortune 1000 firms. The 11 media giants also have 36 "direct" links, meaning two people who serve on different media firm boards of directors and also serve on the same board for another *Fortune 1000* corporation. Each of the 11 media giants has at least two such interlocks. GE has 17 direct links to nine of the other 10 media giants; Time Warner has direct links to seven of them. In combination, this suggests that the corporate media are very closely linked to each other, and to the highest echelons of the corporate community. As a recent study of this issue concluded: "The media in the United States effectively represent the interests of corporate America."

It is true that the system does produce much of value. In those areas that are especially commercially lucrative—sports, action films, business news, light comedies, celebrity coverage and certain types of popular music—the system is quite productive. For more affluent demographic groups, there is considerable choice within these genres, thanks to burgeoning growth in the number of media channels. Moreover, investors and advertisers tend to make lousy artists, so the media giants are required to utilize the talents of some very creative people, and in doing so some good material gets produced. But by its very nature the commercial system mitigates against creativity and has a difficult time establishing original commercially successful fare. It has 20-20 hindsight, always aping what has worked in the past or for competitors, and then recreating it without the initial creative spark. And the commercial system has no incentive to take time to develop audiences for new types of fare.

The hyper-commercialism of the system increases exponentially with the role of advertising. One effect of corporate concentration is that the media appear ever more willing and able to serve Madison Avenue. We are in the midst of what is little short of the commercial carpetbombing our culture. The sheer number of television ads has increased considerably on broadcast television in the past decade. Nearly $120 billion is being spent by advertisers on U.S. media in

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Why We Need a Campaign for Media Democracy

by Todd Samusson

For over two decades, public access television has been a fixture on the American media landscape. Millions of Americans now enjoy the ability of access to electronic media. Access to channels, equipment, studios, media literacy training and—through those—access to their communities. Primarily through the vehicle of cable franchise agreements, citizens have a tiny opening in the huge wall of telecommunications and electronic media. We have our niche. It's not a big one, but we have it.

In a niche, you can lose track of the forces around you and that can be dangerous. In media, the players are big and the stakes are high. Let's drag out the crystal ball and do some forecasting so that we aren't blindsided by those forces.

Bring on the Fiber

For years we've heard of a coming change in the delivery system of television signals which will reduce coaxial cable to carrier pigeon status in favor of the higher capacity, digital medium of fiber optics.

What happened to the digital revolution and its thousand channels of video, audio, and data? Video phones in every home. Everyone online—all the time. Why hasn't the fiber optic future arrived? The technology exists, why don't we have it? One reason is that the transition to fiber optics means an expensive infrastructure overhaul. Since local cable companies already have a monopoly, what's the rush? To lay out the cash needed to replace cable, a lot of money suddenly becomes unavailable for stock dividends. Media stockholders would have to trade short term profits for a longer-term investment, something rarely done in today's economy. Another reason is that a fiber transition means an unprecedented turf battle between the telecommunications powers-that-be.

Confronting the future can't wait until the mergers are complete and the fiber lines are laid.

Clash of the Titans

When one delivery system serves your TV, computer, phone, and radio, the owner of that system will be the most powerful force in society. Bill Gates knows this, that's why he recently tried to grab a huge chunk of TCI. The primary reason we don't have fiber optic systems now is because nobody has emerged yet as the clear winner of the war to own the system. Groundwork is undoubtly being laid for mergers and takeovers. Investors are being pumped; banks are being primed. Armies of lawyers and lobbyists are honing their cell phones and campaign contributions for the battle to make sure that local, state, and federal elected officials don't raise concerns about "monopoly" or "anti-trust" or "public access". The phone companies, television networks, cable conglomerates, software giants, and other telecommandos are donning their armor for the clash of the titans. High rollers only. Let the best conglomerate win. Winner take all. No whining about "the public." Only players get in this game.

> *"The battle for a high-fiber, digital diet is the battle for the future of democracy."*

The outcome of this impending clash will shape the global economy, the political landscape, education, law, the very culture itself. The battle for a high-fiber, digital diet is the battle for the future of democracy. The very existence of community media center is at stake. If we aren't in the mix when the deals go down, the entire financial foundation that supports community media will be eliminated. We might get some bandwidth, but we won't get the funding. Not the way things are going now.

Inventing the Future

Confronting the future can't wait until the mergers are complete and the fiber lines are laid. To have an impact on the year 2015, organizing needs to begin now. Ultimately, the job of assuring public access to electronic media will take the building of a movement far broader than the current membership of the Alliance for Comunity Media. It has to reach beyond the obvious constituencies of access centers and convey the importance of this issue to the people of the United States.

The impact of cable legislation passed in 1984 is only now beginning to hit some community access centers as their cable franchise agreements come up for renewal. Centers which had taken operating funds for granted now face the harsh realities of that 14-year-old legislation. A valiant legislative effort in 1996 preserved the ability of communities to have access to channels and equipment, but didn't assure operating funds. The battle for access in the future will take place in an arena of staff and funding cuts. The Alliance for Community Media has been supported for years thanks to local centers with budgets that allowed people to attend conferences and board meetings. Local cuts will impact the Alliance.

Still, the community media movement has blessings to count. We have resources past movements only dreamed of having. Imagine if the civil rights movement had been supported by the staffs, offices, and facilities in the many centers that support the Alliance. Never in the history of the world has there been a movement with our resources. Activists have struggled for numerous great causes on little more than determination and courage. Certainly we can do as well being the first movement on Earth with a vast network of television stations.

Todd Samusson is an organizational learning and development consultant in Portland, Oregon. He can be reached at toddsamu@teleport.com

The Campaign for Media Democracy

At its 1998 Conference in Portland, Oregon the Alliance for Community Media will launch the **Campaign for Media Democracy**. The campaign is a series of grassroots initiatives aimed at strengthening public awareness of community media and placing greater control of electronic media in the hands of local communities.

A campaign is a *sustained, coordinated, connected series of actions designed to bring about a particular result.* It provides a framework to clarify the issue and a lens to focus actions amplifying their impacts. This campaign will provide a name and focus to activities we already do in our communities and will create new activities.

Access centers already conduct community outreach. Centers have to justify their existence to local governments, renew franchises and contracts, fend off a variety of attacks, and explain freedom of expression and the value of community communication. This happens on the local level, one center at a time. But what if centers across the country used common language? When people hear the same messages over and over from a variety of sources, eventually they take notice. *A goal of the campaign is to create a common assumption among the American public that access to electronic communications is a basic human right necessary for a just society.* We do that through repetition of common language framing the issue in our own terms.

With a new executive director experienced in coalition-building and grassroots organizing, the Alliance is poised to move into the 21st century on a new wave of media advocacy and activism. In the months ahead, the ACM Public Policy Committee and staff will be working to shape and implement the **Campaign for Media Democracy** in partnership with community media centers around the country.

Possible Campaign Elements

Community Media Week. A week-long series of activities held around the country where centers do coordinated activities to elevate the visibility of the field: news releases; public events; special programming on the channels; and having local governments issue community media week proclamations. It's also an opportunity to forge alliances with other local community media.

The Alliance Video. It's time the Alliance had an organizing video making the case for community media and access to electronic communications. We need the seven-, fifteen-, and thirty minute versions.

Basic Literature. We need literature framing the issue and making the case for access and democracy. A brochure with the Alliance logo and contact information plus a space for local organization to stick on a label with their center's info. We also need background materials such as reprints of articles for more in-depth analysis of the issues.

Letter Writing Campaigns. A letter-writing campaign means coordinating *when to write what to whom.* The Alliance can build on previous public policy oriented letter-writing campaigns, establishing us as an ongoing and active constituency. We may need to generate letters in opposition to threatening legislation. When we are ready to develop pro-access legislation, we can launch a positive letter-writing campaign to support it.

The Media Democracy Petition Drive. Petitions are great for educating and organizing. A well-worded petition can frame the issue and advocate policy in a common language by including the "why" as well as the "what." Petitions have two primary uses. They're an opportunity to draw someone into a conversation about the relationship of media, and media access, to democracy. They also indicator of support when petitions are presented to policymakers. The sample petition is worded to work on a local, state, national, and international level (see box below).

Raising the Access Issue with Elected Officials. Many centers around the country produce programming that is some form of video voters guide. The process for inviting candidates to appear on such programs can include presenting the candidate with the above-mentioned literature to educate them on the connection between media access and democracy.

Change Your Training. Most access centers have some form of media literacy or television production training. Why not include a component on the importance of access to democracy and the threats to the future of access. The ACM literature (or a local version) can be handed out as background material.

Alliances with the Alliance. Seek out organizations with compatible goals. Groups dealing with justice issues are receptive. Most social service organizations understand the need to have a community voice. Environmental organizations need a voice. Campaign finance reform groups address the cost of commercial TV ads. There's also the obvious alliances with other community media in your area (newspapers, radios, internet groups, etc).

These are just a few possibilities for the Campaign for Media Democracy. What will really give it life is your input and participation.

By Todd Samusson with input from Rob Brading, Alan Bushong, Paula Manley, and Fernando Moreno.

Media Democracy Petition

WHEREAS a healthy democratic society is founded upon an engaged, informed, and included citizenry. and

WHEREAS the primary means of public communication and information exchange in our society is through electronic media, and

WHEREAS there is often an inherent conflict of interest between advertising-driven, media-for-profit and media for public and civic communication,

THEREFORE citizens must be assured continous and effective access to electronic media.

In short, modern democracy depends on access to media:

▲ Access to community information; the ability to effectively engage in meaningful civic dialogue.

▲ Literacy in the use of electronic media.

▲ Access to training, equipment, facilities, and delivery systems to create, produce, send, and receive effective media messages.

▲ Access is assured by designated funding for equipping and operating non-commercial, community-based media centers and facilities.

We, the undersigned, encourage elected and appointed officials to support legislation and policies with assure continous and effective access to electronic media.

Spectrum Rush

The Battle for Media Control Moves to the State Level

by Rob Brading
Alliance Public Policy Chair, Executive Director, Multnomah Community Television

Remember those movies depicting the land rushes of the late 1800s? Hundreds of settlers on horseback, wagon, or foot, racing across an open landscape, in a mad dash for a homestead. There were always schemers plotting to deprive ordinary folks of their chance at a prime piece of land or even any piece at all. The aftermath of the 1996 Telecommunications Act is a lot like a land rush. Lots of dust and uncertainty, lots of clamoring for territory, lots of ordinary folks and their interests left in the ruts as telecommunications companies make their break for billions.

After making relatively few changes in telecommunications law in more than 50 years, Congress passed a sweeping rewrite in 1996. Much of the new law was written out of public view by the very companies to which it applies. As a result, the public knew little and understood less about this legislation which barely pays lip service to any public interest, other than to promise lower rates through competition.

We have not only the opportunity but the obligation to tell our story and show corporate attempts to privatize public space.

Telecommunication companies (telcos) were dividing this huge pie among themselves. The significance of the Act is reflected in the vast contributions of telcos' campaign contributions that year. The contributions far exceeded those of insurers, health providers, and hospitals and HMOs in that same year when Congress was debating a national health insurance plan.

What the telcos didn't get from Congress in 1996, they have been seeking to obtain at the state level. While the federal legislation still allows municipalities to collect a reasonable fee for the use of public rights-of-way (ROWs), the telcos are working through the state legislatures to eliminate that provision, thus threatening the financial foundation of community media.

Public Space for Private Gain: The State-Level Arena

In the past two years state-level legislation attacking fees for right-of-way use have generally been initiated by regional telephone companies, but supported by cable television providers, large and small. It doesn't take much to figure out that if the telephone companies succeed in severely limiting their public obligations, it won't be long before the cable companies ask for the same treatment, claiming the need for a "level playing field."

The most common form of legislation limits the compensation localities can receive for use of public rights-of-way. While the telcos often deride the value of public ROWs, they know full well that the actual value is enormous. In many urban areas, ROWs are close to being filled with competing telecommunications providers all competing for limited space. Seeking the equivalent use of ROW from the private land owners would require tedious multiple negotiations and would be extremely expensive. In short, the use of public ROWs is more than a bargain for telecommunications providers.

Nonetheless, they've been successful in persuading state legislators to limit franchise fees, the rent for using public ROWs. Riding current anti-tax climate, telcos argue that franchise fees are nothing more than another tax. In actuality, these companies are making use of public property for private gain. The public has a right to fair compensation just as would a private land owner, who would be considered foolish to allow one of these companies to use land without compensation.

Telcos argue that since they pass on franchise fees to their customers (although they are not required to do so), decreasing franchise fees will benefit the customer through lower rates. Yet they fail to mention that when franchise fees have gone down, there have not been corresponding permanent cuts in customer rates. The decrease in franchise fees has resulted in higher profits for the company, not lower rates for customers.

These franchise fee limitations usually include a provision restricting franchise fees to the direct costs incurred by a locality when fibers or cable are installed or to direct ROW management costs, such as permits. In Indiana, for example, legislation limits payments to localities to "direct, actual and reasonably incurred" costs of managing ROWs. Long-term costs, such as increased maintenance, depreciation and degradation of a roadway that has been cut into, are often completely ignored and local jurisdictions actually end up subsidizing the telcos which are using their ROWs. In California, legislation has been introduced that would restrict the definition of gross revenues to basic cable for purposes of calculating the five per cent franchise fee. The bill explicitly exempts any additional revenues from additional servers such as cable modems.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, companies have been successful in convincing legislators that franchise fees somehow deter competition. In one of the few cases where there's actual competition among cable providers, all the companies pay a five percent franchise fee and support relatively rich public, education and government (PEG) access requirements even though their rates are substantially below the benchmarks set by the Federal Communications Commission.

Attacks on the ability of local jurisdictions to collect franchise fees have not been the only telco tactic. Despite their rhetoric describing government as inefficient and unbusiness-like, telcos appear to fear competition from local governments. The Virginia legislature passed

legislation which keeps municipalities from competing with any telco by outlawing overbuilds. Similar legislation has been introduced in other states. Some legislation has required localities to provide guaranteed access to ROWs by telcos, ignoring costs or capacity limitations.

Provisions supported by the telcos sometimes appear in seemingly unrelated legislation, such as in California where it was attached to a land use planning bill. Or some bills appear at the end of legislative sessions after being crafted behind closed doors with friendly legislators. And, of course, when legislative action fails, telcos can and have resorted to the courts where they can seek to invalidate local laws. In Arizona, US West and AT&T have gone to court, arguing that franchise fees are unconstitutional.

Organizing at the State Level: What You Can Do

As Michael Greenberger, who argued the Alliance's successful case before the U.S. Supreme Court, said at the 1996 national Alliance conference, we're in a marathon, not a sprint. Community media activists have rallied, lobbied, written, talked, and organized to defeat legislation in several states. But the financial stakes for the telcos are so high that even where they've lost, they'll be back.

Community media centers will need a sustained and organized long-term response to combat the powerful telecommunications companies that want to privatize public space. We've been fighting rear-guard actions to fend off these assaults. It's time to move beyond that and build support for maintaining local control of ROWs and other public spaces.

First, build alliances. Develop contacts in your state capitol. One of the biggest hurdles is finding out what's going on in the legislature. Organizations such as Sate Leagues of Cities have a substantial interest in preserving local management of local ROWs and they track what's going on in the legislature. A working relationship with the State League of Cities can keep you informed about legislative activity without spending a lot of time or money to keep someone in the state capitol.

Local government officials, whether staff or elected, are also potential sources for information since they often have lobbyists or other connections that keep them informed about legislative activity. Legislative threats provide an opportunity to build stronger relationships with your city officials. They have an obvious interest in retaining local control of ROWs, and community media centers can be an important ally for them.

Don't be the only group advocating your position. Ask non-profit organizations that use your channels to testify or write letters in your behalf. Educate other non-profits, consumer groups and political organizations about your issues. Even if you can't get them to support you, they may not go against you. It's a lot better to have a consumer group on the side lines instead of fighting you.

Use your channels. Community media is a powerful but under-used tool to tell its own story. Most non-profits and government agencies can only dream of producing television programming and cablecasting it. Public service announcements, live call-ins, teach-ins, interviews, coverage of public events, bringing speakers to town and a variety of other tactics can be used to create programming that tells our story. We have not only the opportunity but the obligation to tell our story and show corporate attempts to privatize public space. If we're not telling the story, who will?

Make community media and maintaining the local management of local ROWs a campaign issue. Ask candidates for political office where they stand on this issue. If you sponsor or work with groups like the League of Women Voters to sponsor candidate debates, make sure that candidates are asked about preserving local management of public ROWs.

Some states have legislative media services that produce live or taped coverage of legislative sessions. See if you can get the feed and cablecast legislative sessions. Cablecasting your state legislature provides an important public service and provides a concrete benefit to the legislators that demonstrates the value of community television.

Spend time with your legislators. Educate them about your issues and what your community media center does. Organize a lobby day. Prepare your supporters with a concise and coherent message and get them in front of legislators. If there's a hearing on the bill, try to get on the agenda to testify. Pack the room with your supporters and advocates. Get representatives of other organizations to testify in your support. Get politicians on your channels. Tape testimonials from supportive officials and play them on your channels.

Promote your center. Use your channels to tell viewers about the great work you do and how your center impacts the community. Let your community know that local control is being attacked. Speak at civic organizations and service clubs. Write a guest editorial for your local newspaper.

Organize the people who use your center. Chances are that they have a better understanding of the issues than most other folks. Tape testimonials from these folks and play them on your channels. Get them to write letters, make calls, send faxes to legislators. Organize a rally in support of community media.

Since so many community television facilities receive their funding from local franchise fees, eliminating the ability of local jurisdictions to manage their ROWs and to collect franchise fees for private use assaults both the financial and the philosophical underpinnings of community media. The financial threat is obvious. Without franchise fees, many centers would close their doors. But without local franchising, cable companies couldn't be required to provide channel space for public purposes.

The idea of local control has always been fundamental to community media: local folks negotiating and acting to meet local needs. The actions supported by telcos at the state level threaten to remove that local control and turn it over to private, profit-impelled conglomerates that have little interest or connection with local affairs. If local jurisdictions are deprived of the right to manage public property, the entire concept of public space–that some places should be preserved for public use –is threatened, and with it, the very basis of community media. Now is the time to organize to meet these threats to the public good.

Demystifying THE CABLE FRANCHISE RENEWAL PROCESS

BY SUE BUSKE

To most observers, the cable franchise renewal process seems complex and confusing. Often, only attorneys appear to understand what's going on. However, the process can involve a straightforward (but time-consuming) set of procedures that are not too difficult to grasp.

The communities with the most successful results approach renewal as an opportunity to undertake a community-wide communications planning process. These places typically conduct the renewal process in a precise and methodical manner that makes every attempt to comply with the formal procedures outlined in the federal Cable Act. The renewal process should include community education components that provide valuable information about how cable can be a community communications tool (in addition to just being a way to receive TV signals), and should provide many opportunities for public input.

Section 626 of the Cable Act provides two approaches to franchise renewal: "informal" and "formal". The informal process calls for the incumbent cable operator and the City to agree to renewal procedures that they wish to use. If the cable operator wants to maintain certain rights available to it under the Cable Act, it initiates the formal process. To do so, the cable operator must notify the franchising authority in writing (between 36 and 30 months prior to the expiration of its franchise) that it wishes to have its franchise renewed by using the formal process. The most common approach for renewal is the formal process.

Under this section of the Cable Act, the franchising authority may deny the cable operator's request for renewal only if one or more of the following applies:

▲ the cable operator is in substantial noncompliance with the material terms of the existing franchise and applicable law; or

▲ the quality of the operator's service, including signal quality, response to consumer complaints, and billing practices (but without regard to the mix or quality of cable services or other services provided over the system), has not been reasonable in light of community needs; or

▲ the operator lacks the financial, legal, and technical ability to provide the services, facilities, and equipment set forth in the operator's proposal; or

▲ the operator's proposal (regarding what it will provide for the upcoming term of any new franchise) is not reasonable to meet future cable-related community needs and interests, taking into account the cost of meeting such needs and interests.

The Cable Act calls for the franchising authority to initiate a process that includes an examination of the cable operator's past performance and an effort to identify the community's future cable-related needs and interests. During this renewal process an opportunity for public input must be provided. Federal law does not specify how public input should be solicited, but it does require public hearings.

Examining the permissible reasons to deny a cable operator's request for renewal, it's clear a thorough review of past performance and a detailed community needs assessment are critical to properly prepare the franchising authority to negotiate an agreement that will meet local telecommunication infrastructure needs into the 21st century.

Another component of a typical franchise renewal process is a review and update of the sections of the City/County Code that deal with cable systems. The Code creates the basic "rules of the road" for any company that wants to operate a cable system in the community. The Code usually addresses such matters as customer service standards, procedures for handling future applications for franchises, renewals or ownership transfers, PEG Access guidelines, insurance, bonding, security fund, etc.

Some communities have no section of a City/County Code dealing with cable systems. In these situations, everything is addressed in the franchise agreement. However, given the fact that there are more communities today than in the past which are being served by more than one cable provider (the number of these may increase in the future), we believe that it is advisable to use an approach that (1) only includes those items which are specifically negotiable in the franchise, and (2) addresses all other matters in the City/County Code. Such an approach helps to create a "level

PREPARING FOR RENEWAL — THINGS TO REMEMBER

√ Review franchise agreement and all actions of City/County Council regarding cable during the term of the franchise.

√ Review all cable-related files, including performance audits/reviews, correspondence, etc.

√ Conduct an extensive process to identify future community cable-related needs and interests including Public, Educational, and Government Access.

√ Analyze cable operator's past performance and identify problems (if any).

√ Create a special Renewal Committee or direct current Cable Advisory Committee or Board to be a player in renewal process, especially during the assessment of community needs and interests.

√ Educate Cable Advisory body, elected officials, and key City staff.

√ Educate community and community leaders about renewal and cable issues (workshops are often very effective).

√ Educate press – try to help them become knowledgeable about the renewal process.

√ Solicit community input of future needs and interests through questionnaires, letters of support, position papers.

√ Get community actively involved and participating in the public hearing process.

Franchise Renewal Tasks

■ Renewal Planning

- Δ Develop Renewal Plan
- Δ Establish a Cable Franchise Renewal Committee
- Δ Select Consultant to Assist with the Renewal Process (if budget permits)

■ Review Past Performance

- Δ Engineering/Technical Review of Cable Plant
- Δ Customer Service Review/Customer Service Standards
- Δ Financial Review of Cable Operator
- Δ Contract Compliance Review
- Δ Community Programming Review (PEG Access and Local Origination)
- Δ Public Hearings on Cable Operator's Past Performance

■ Identification of Future Cable-Related Community Needs and Interests

- Δ Conduct Focus Group Workshops; Distribute Questionnaires
- Δ Institutional Network Services Ascertainment (Optional)
- Δ Gather and Review Plans from Community Organizations, Institutions, Local Government (Technology, Long-Range, Strategic, Communications Plans)
- Δ Identify Goals and Recommendations for Renewal Franchises
- Δ Public Hearings on Future Cable-Related Community Needs and Interests

■ Review and Update Primary Cable-Related Documents

- Δ Review Current Cable Communication Franchise and Ordinance
- Δ Update and Rewrite Ordinance
- Δ Prepare Draft of New Franchise
- Δ Assure Compliance with Federal, State and Local Laws
- Δ Implement Cable Act Provisions

■ Negotiations and Request for Renewal Proposals

- Δ Determine Negotiating Strategies
- Δ Conduct Informal and/or Formal Negotiations
- Δ Prepare Request for Renewal Proposals (if informal negotiating process is not successful)
- Δ Evaluate Submitted Proposals
- Δ Determine Whether to Preliminarily Grant or Deny Renewal of Franchise
- Δ Prepare Final Franchise Agreement (if renewed franchise is granted)
- Δ Conduct Final Public Hearing
- Δ Franchise Renewal Completed

Techniques for Identifying Community Needs and Interests

- Δ Telephone or Mail Survey (Subscribers and Non-Subscribers)
- Δ Technology Assessment (I-Net Study)
- Δ Focus Group Workshops
- Δ Review of Current PEG Access Operations and Facilities
- Δ Nonprofit/Service/Civic Organization Survey
- Δ Collection/Analysis of Technology and Strategic Plans
- Δ Interviews with Community Leaders
- Δ Public Hearings (Two or More)
- Δ Preparation of Report(s) that Document the Findings and Recommendations.

playing field" for all entities wishing to provide cable service in your community. This approach requires the cable operator to comply with the City/County Code as a condition of its franchise agreement in a variety of areas (including, but not limited to, how it operates in the public streets and rights of way).

After the review of past performance and the process of identifying community needs and interests are completed (see the adjacent boxes for more detail on what needs to be done), the franchising authority should establish desired outcomes for the renewal process and develop a model franchise that includes those goals. Typically, desired outcomes fall within the following areas:

- ▲ Cable system upgrade/rebuild.
- ▲ PEG Access channels, equipment, facilities, and support.
- ▲ Institutional network.
- ▲ Franchise fees.
- ▲ Rights of the franchising authority to enforce the franchise.
- ▲ "Re-opener" opportunities.
- ▲ Line extension policy (i.e., housing density standards that determine where the cable company must extend its service).

While these topics are typically the primary areas of negotiations between the franchising authority and the cable operator, the franchise itself will address many other topics. Once the franchising authority has completed the above tasks, it attempts to negotiate a new agreement with the cable operator. The negotiations can take from two months to several years, depending on the frequency of the negotiating sessions and ability of the participants to concur on the terms of a new franchise agreement.

If the franchising authority and the incumbent cable operator cannot reach agreement after a reasonable amount of time at the negotiating table, it is advisable (and consistent with Section 626 of the Cable Act) to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP). After a proposal is received from the cable company in response to the RFP, the franchising authority has four months to review the proposal and determine whether to (1) preliminarily grant a new franchise, or (2) preliminary deny renewal based upon the terms of the submitted proposal.

Reviewing the reasons for denial previously discussed, it's clear how critical it is to conduct a very comprehensive needs assessment and past performance review. The thoroughness with which a franchising authority conducts those two activities is absolutely pivotal to what happens at this juncture in the renewal process.

See DEMYSTIFYING – page 18

OUTCOMES OF FIVE RECENT CABLE FRANCHISE RENEWALS

City/State Cable Company No. of Subscribers Year Renewed	Franchise Term	Rebuild Highlights	Institutional Network	PEG Access Channels	Cable Company Funding for PEG Access Equipment and Facilities	Support for PEG Access Services	
						Source	Amount
Monterey, CA TCI 11,500 1998	10 Years	Initial: digital upgrade (to add 36 video and 10 audio channels) Within 2 years: (a) fiber/coax rebuild, (b) Internet service available Interconnection with adjacent systems	Yes	Initial: 1 After 1 Year: 2 After 2 Years: 4 Thereafter: up to (a) 6 analog, or (b) 24 digital plus 12 MHz, or (c) 6 HDTV	Initial: $800,000 Ongoing: 35¢ per sub per month	Cable Company City	70¢ per sub per month (City may increase this amount.) 30 promotional spot insertions per month: free video and print program listings; annual billstuffer. $2,000/channel if relocated 32% of franchise fees
Iowa City, IA TCI 21,000 1995	10 Years	550 MHz fiber/coax rebuild	No	Initial: 6 Additional 2 channels available, based on trigger	50¢ per sub per month	Cable Company City	$149,554/year, plus annual inflation adjustment (for Public Access) Annual allocation for Government Access from City budget
Santa Rosa, CA Cable One 43,000 1996	15 Years	550 MHz fiber/coax rebuild Within 30 months: Internet service available Interconnection with adjacent systems	Yes	Initial: 2 After 2 Years: 4 Thereafter: up to 7	Initial: $1,200,000 Replacement: $1,300,000	Cable Company City	$150,000/year $350,000/year (37% of franchise fees)
Tucson, AZ TCI 81,000 1997	10 Years	550 MHz fiber/coax rebuild Internet capability	Yes	Initial: 7 (until upgrade is completed) Thereafter: up to 9 analog or 20 digital, plus data capacity.	40¢ per sub per month	Cable Company	2% of gross revenues to support use of PEG and I-Net 75 promotional spot insertions per month; free video and print program listings. Up to $5,000/channel if relocated
Montgomery Co., MD Prime Cable 200,000 1998	15 Years	750 MHz fiber/coax rebuild	Yes	13 analog channels up to 10% of digital spectrum	Year 1: $2,000,000 Year 2: $1,200,000 Thereafter: $200,000 per year, adjusted for CPI	Cable Company	$1,500,000 per year, adjusted for CPI



Organizing for Success

Access Tucson's Franchise Renewal

by Kate Hiller
Community Relations Director, Access Tucson

At Access Tucson we approached our franchise renewal as a campaign we intended to win. Our strategy was to reaffirm Access Tucson as a valuable community resource in the eyes of local community leaders and decision makers. We developed a renewal campaign plan that included a focused message, extensive press relations, a lobbying effort directed at local decision makers and a mobilization plan for our supporters. Before all this happened, however, we knew we needed to get our house in order.

Getting the House in Order

In 1993, with four years until renewal, Access Tucson initiated a community ascertainment survey. We hired a partnership of local and national consultants to survey community based organizations and our individual members about access facilities, services and our public image. We learned that we needed to make big changes in the basic services to make the facility more accessible to both individuals and community-based groups. We discovered that community groups needed our services to be easier to use–they didn't have technical experience and didn't have time or interest in developing that experience. They simply wanted to get their message out. The survey also told us that many people in the Tucson community did not know who we were, or knew us because of negative publicity from controversial programs. To secure a favorable franchise renewal, it was going to be an uphill struggle.

Access Tucson hired a consultant to help us re-engineer how we delivered many of our services. We improved classes and developed staff-assisted programs with easy-to-use formats to better accommodate community-based groups. To increase our visibility in the community we made an effort to improve public relations, including: a name and image change; development of a print and a video brochure; channel reorganization to be more viewer friendly; and development of a presentation packet for the press and local decision makers. Two and a half years after the community ascertainment was started, the redesigns were implemented. Eighteen months remained on the contract.

The Franchise Renewal Campaign

In early 1996, the Access Tucson Board of Directors and staff gathered at a retreat with a singular goal for the next 18 months–a successful renewal! A board/staff committee was established to oversee the process. The committee functioned to strategize, focus, and direct all efforts of the organization. It made decisions on when to visit City Council members, how to deal with the press, when to initiate a letter writing campaign, and when to mobilize people to attend public hearings. Early on, board members and staff visited a "group decision lab" at the local university. The lab assists groups in making decisions, planning and brainstorming via computer. We used the lab to generate lists of people that could provide support during the renewal period. By the end of a two hour session, we had identified mobilizers (people who represented a constituency), influencers (prominent business and civic leaders), and decision-makers (elected political representatives and their staff). Each of these different groups were approached for help. Mobilizers got people to attend public hearings and to write letters to the City of Tucson's Telecommunication Administrator for the City's ascertainment. Influencers called or visited City Council members at critical moments. We also utilized them to write letters to the editor or op-ed pieces in the local newspapers. As might be expected, the decision makers were the focus of this activity.

Educating and Visiting the Decision Makers

During the negotiation period, Access Tucson's executive director, the board chair and the community relations director visited the mayor and council members with a variety of purposes. Education was a key goal of the visits. Many council members had been on public access programs, but their perceptions varied from supportive, to lukewarm, to negative. In a time of severe public and private funding cuts for many local service providers, the majority of the council wanted to know how public access was serving the community and why it should be funded. We found decision makers more concerned with how public access was serving the groups and organizations that were addressing community-wide issues, than with the tangible value of free speech. All council members supported free speech, but the political realities of tight budgets and community awareness made it necessary for them to support direct services rather than ideals.

We provided them with examples of how groups they supported used Access Tucson facilities. Council members are key in the franchise renewal process, because they set the renewal priorities for staff and city consultants. After initial educational visits, we were interested in who we could consider a supporter. This changed a number of times during the renewal period revealing that keeping in touch with the council members was our highest priority.

Working with City of Tucson Staff and TCI of Tucson Representatives

Although council members had the final vote, it was city staff that negotiated with the cable company representatives. To our surprise, it's very rare to have a public access representative at the negotiating table. A typical negotiating session included City of Tucson telecommunications administrator and city attorney and any outside consultants. TCI was represented by a negotiator from the regional office and the local general manager. However, Access Tucson worked closely throughout the renewal process with both the city and cable company staff to make sure our concerns were heard. Complicating this situation,

a new telecommunications administrator was hired from outside Tucson several months before negotiations began. Access Tucson's executive director was able to develop a close and supportive relationship with the new administrator, which allowed us to participate informally in the PEG component of the license negotiations.

Since we saw ourselves represented by the city, we worked hard to support their negotiation efforts. When the city did an ascertainment of their own, surveying subscribers about a range of cable issues, we helped them, using our website, mailing list, and channels to encourage public participation in the survey.

Our relationship with TCI of Tucson was more complex. We worked diligently to depersonalize the process, but it was clear that any franchise support for public access would come at the expense of their bottom line. We wanted to maintain as many possible public access channels as we could. TCI wanted to recapture as many PEG channels to use for revenue generation. We wanted to maintain a certain funding level for operations. TCI offered only capital support. Despite these differences, we worked to avoid positioning TCI as the enemy in the eyes of our staff, our members, and the public. Our strategy was to deal with TCI as the partner that we always wanted them to be. We also worked with TCI to help them see public access and local programming as an added value to their system, a feature that their competitors did not provide.

As a part of Access Tucson's board make up there is an ex-officio position for the cable provider's general manager. This created interesting situations during the negotiations–during particularly tense times TCI's general manager would attend monthly board meetings also attended by concerned and vocal access producers. Adhoc discussions would erupt concerning the current state of the negotiations; at times it seemed as if the city and TCI were using the board meetings to continue their negotiations. The telecommunications administrator would deliver his report - including his spin on the negotiations. The TCI general manager would follow, and in his report would present his version of the progress of the negotiations. Access Tucson's position during the negotiations was best summed up by our executive director, who said that oftentimes it seemed as if we were watching from the sidelines as two gun fighters squared off in the street.

On dealing with TCI

Our relationship with TCI of Tucson was more complex. We worked diligently to depersonalize the process, but it was clear that any franchise support for public access would come at the expense of their bottom line. . .we worked to avoid positioning TCI as the enemy in the eyes of our staff, our members, and the public. Our strategy was to deal with TCI as the partner that we always wanted them to be.

A Media Strategy

A key component of Access Tucson's strategy was to keep our name and services in the local papers. Our media strategy included visiting the editorial boards of Tucson's daily and weekly papers; utilizing free listings for class information and program announcements; running display ads; writing oped articles and letters to the editor; and engaging reporters to write feature stories. The strategy worked. There were regular stories on the progress of the negotiations, services and programs at Access Tucson and a great deal of editorial support for access during the franchise renewal.

A key component to our success was the development of message points. Message points are specific points that you wish to convey. Our information packet included message points conveying Access Tucson as a vital community resource. The packet included: the number of community-based groups served annually; the hours of locally produced programs; listing national awards from the Alliance for Community Media; and our mission statement.

We also developed specific message points for every press meeting, every public hearing and every discussion with the city council. These points supported the general message but were specific to the circumstance, i.e. a meeting with a council member about a provision in the contract, or a reporter who was writing about a public access program. We knew this strategy was working when the city council and the press began repeating our message points as if they were their own.

Constituent Support

Access Tucson worked with public access producers and community-based organizations to create opportunities for people to publicly support public access. The staff encouraged people to attend public hearings, write letters to the telecommunication administrator and to contact their city council representative. When we organized a letter writing campaign, we put together packets that included message points, draft letters and the people to contact. This tactic was helpful in creating a common voice of support and it also made it easy for busy people to support us. What we foresaw, but could not control, were the responses by access producers to the protracted and at times acrimonious negotiations. Access producers felt threatened and strongly identified the cable company as the chief villain, correctly or not. During the most difficult part of the negotiations, a group of producers formed a coalition to take direct action. Their most visible activity was to picket in front of a TCI office. This action generated some television coverage and raised awareness in the community about the concerns of public access producers. It also sent a

A key lesson learned from our franchise renewal process was that, no matter how hard or how creatively we pressed our case, we were ultimately on the outside looking in. Representatives from the city and TCI hold the authority to decide the details, not us.

message to the TCI general manager that there was a vocal group of producers that were going to fight publicly for public access funding. Access Tucson took a hands off approach to these activities and strategy. We were doing all we could to direct access members through our own campaign–it is appropriate, and inevitable, that members organize themselves. It could have also been very problematic had we tried to stop them.

At the point that it looked like Access Tucson would have to close its doors because of lack of funding, a vocal group of executive directors representing community-based organizations also felt they needed to make a public statement. At a press conference to communicate their outrage that the City would let the negotiations deteriorate to this point, they called for prompt action to save this important community resource. These actions communicated directly or indirectly to the people at the negotiating table and to city council members that there was wide support for public access in the Tucson community. In September of 1997, the Tucson City Council voted unanimously in favor of the franchise renewal contract between themselves and TCI of Tucson. In December of the same year, they voted to fund Access Tucson for 10 years.

Present Day and the Future

In the last five years public access facilities have fared worse under franchise renewals than under their original contracts. Cable franchise renewal certainly changed the status of public access in Tucson. In some respects it weakened it–the total number of PEG channels was reduced from 13 to seven, with Access Tucson going from four channels to two. But in a fundamental way, the new cable license radically re-defined the relationship between Access Tucson and TCI, establishing a business relationship that ties our fortunes directly to theirs. Access Tucson's funding increases when TCI of Tucson increases its subscriber base, and also when its revenue increases. The change is simple but significant–we can no longer see the cable company in an adversarial way. It is in our direct interest for the company to be financially successful. The new agreement offers the cable provider a realistic reason for seeing Access Tucson as a benefit, not a hindrance.

In an era when satellite services can provide the same amount of programming, the old cliché of public access providing a local voice takes on a new significance. As markets and audiences fragment in the face of so many channels and choices, the home-grown diversity and uniqueness of public access allows the cable provider a cost-effective way to separate themselves from out-of-state providers. In retrospect, the internal planning and re-organization we undertook for the license renewal paid off, even if the results were not always visible in the new agreement. Had we not successfully established the importance of public access to the mayor, city council and staff, Access Tucson would have fared much worse in the final outcome.

A key lesson learned from our franchise renewal process was that, no matter how hard or how creatively we pressed our case, we were ultimately on the outside looking in. Representatives from the city and TCI hold the authority to decide the details, not us. Where we have power to make positive changes is in our own organization and the coalitions we built as supporters. It is as much here as in the details of the new contract that the effects of the renewal process can be seen. By current standards, Access Tucson was very successful. Although at first we felt shell shocked and a bit damaged, we now have became a stronger organization because of the work done and the new partnerships created. Taking the lessons learned, we are moving to the next level of providing service in our community and are ready for new challenges.

Demystifying...

continued from page 14

If the franchising authority denies renewal, either it or the cable operator may commence an "administrative proceeding", under Section 626 of the Cable Act. The proceeding is conducted like a trial, including oversight by a hearing officer, introduction of evidence, questioning of witnesses, and publication of a transcript. The hearing officer's decision is forwarded to the appropriate local governing body, which makes a final determination regarding denial or grant of a franchise. The cable operator may then decide to appeal that determination in federal district court. While it's rare that a franchising authority issues a determination to preliminarily deny renewal, such determinations have increased recently.

If a franchising authority carefully conducts the renewal process, effectively educates the community, and involves citizens, PEG Access producers, community groups, service clubs, neighborhood associations, and religious groups, the outcomes can be impressive. Franchise renewal in such communities (even places previously lacking such provisions in their franchises) has included:

▲ Cable system fiber optic rebuild.

▲ Substantial channel capacity expansion.

▲ Two-way services, including access to the Internet.

▲ PEG Access spectrum/channel capacity.

▲ Funding and support for PEG Access equipment and facilities.

▲ Funding and support for PEG Access services.

▲ An institutional network.

▲ Substantial improved quality of service.

Another important outcome of franchise renewal that is not discussed very often, is the fact that ongoing community partnerships regarding community communications can evolve as a result of this process. An example is Santa Rosa, California. The chart on page 15 on renewal outcomes profiles Santa Rosa and a few other communities that recently completed franchise renewal, with exciting and far-reaching results.

Sue Buske is a longtime ACM member and a franchise renewal expert and community communications consultant with the Buske Group in Sacramento, CA.

'You can never have too many leaders.'

The Case for Growing Grassroots Community Media Leadership

by Paula Manley

Why should people involved in community media care about leadership development? Simply stated, the survival of our field depends on it. We know our work promoting media access, media education and nonprofit communication is strengthening the lives of our communities. Our work is vital to grassroots democracy. At the same time, we are challenged by powerful forces that, at times, seem overwhelming.

The rate and scale of the changes we are experiencing are unprecedented. Technological convergence is bringing voice, video, and data communications together in a new digital era; globalization is creating centralized mega-corporations, intensified commercialization, and less local control over telecommunications; and throughout our society, many people report they are feeling a diminished sense of community.

In such an environment, the need for noncommericial public spaces within the media landscape has never been greater. Yet we are losing ground in very tangible ways. Funding for many community media centers is being slashed and what remains of cable franchise fee support from local governments is threatened as regional phone companies intensify their efforts to shift control of public rights-of-way away from the local level.

As community media practitioners, the challenges we face at this point in our history demand that we do our best work. That means clarifying our vision, sharpening our skills, increasing our knowledge, and having the courage to act with both head and heart. In short, we are called to leadership.

What is Leadership?

"Leadership" is often confused with authoritarianism by people working for social change. As a result, potential leaders are frequently reluctant to take on leadership responsibilities. Those who do often emulate the disempowering styles of leadership they have observed. In exploring leadership, it is helpful to examine our own assumptions: Do we believe the experience of leadership can be facilitative, collaborative and empowering? Or are we inclined to see leadership as a solitary endeavor in which the leader is placed on a pedestal, expected to be a "hero," and either credited or blamed for whatever happens?

Although the solitary approach to leadership is heavily reinforced culturally, the U.S. has a rich history of group or collaborative leadership that evolved from Quaker traditions. In the 1970s, peace, anti-nuclear, and women's groups throughout the country refined a variety of group process techniques designed to promote shared responsibility for decision-making and action. A classic text of that era, *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, defined leadership as "a composite of learnable skills through which the efforts of individuals are coordinated to accomplish specific group goals."

The skills required to practice collaborative leadership, as outlined in the *Manual*, are still relevant: accepting and clarifying the feelings of another without threat; stating all sides of a controversy fairly; summarizing discussion; recognizing and interpreting the forces operating in a group; recognizing and articulating discussion themes; coordinating the questions and steps a group needs to consider to reach a decision; collecting and restating group thinking for acceptance and action, and encouraging others to gain experience in and learn leadership skills.

The idea that the prime function of leadership is facilitation rather than domination has been around a long time. In the fifth century B.C., the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, "Of the best leaders, when their task is completed, their work done, the people all remark, 'We have done it ourselves.'" More recently, Peter Senge and others have written extensively about learning organizations and the "new work" of leaders. Senge argues that our traditional view of leaders–as special people who set the direction, make the decisions and energize the troops–reinforces a focus on short-term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systemic forces and collective learning.

Senge sees leaders as designers, teachers and stewards responsible for building shared vision, surfacing and examining assumptions, and fostering whole systems thinking. The task of lead-

"Of the best leaders, when their task is completed, their work done, the people all remark, 'We have done it ourselves.'"
– Lao Tzu, fifth century Chinese philosopher

"Leadership is a composite of learnable skills through which the efforts of individuals are coordinated to accomplish specific group goals."
– Resource Manual for a Living Revolution

"The best leaders inspire people not just to follow the leader, but to follow themselves, to grow in their own abilities, to give direction to their own lives."
– Si Kahn, Organizing: A Guide to Grassroots Leadership

ership, he says, is that of "building organizations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape their future." In short, leaders are responsible for facilitating their own learning and that of others. In his book, *Organizing: A Guide to Grassroots Leadership*, community organizer and musician Si Kahn sums it up this way: "The best leaders inspire people not just to follow the leader, but to follow themselves, to grow in their own abilities, to give direction to their own lives."

Access Centers as Seedbeds

In many ways, our community media centers are seedbeds for empowerment and leadership development.

Community members often improve their skills in communication, teamwork, and problem-solving as they participate in community access training and media production processes. People "come to voice" as they build their skills, tell their own stories and communicate with others on issues that matter to them. Again and again, we see how powerfully people are changed through the experience of working together on a video production and seeing its impact in a community – whether that community is a family, an organization, a neighborhood, a particular constituency or an entire town.

As community access practitioners, we are more than technical experts, producers, and administrators. At its core, our work involves helping people develop the skills and confidence they need to be self-directed and capable of collective action. As we help people see themselves as actors in the context of community, we are developing grassroots leadership. As we develop leadership, we strengthen our own organizations and communities as well as the community media field.

The Four-Fold Way

Doing our best work to encourage the development of new leaders requires a clear understanding of our own strengths and weaknesses as leaders. I have found the work of anthropologist and educator Angeles Arrien to be a helpful framework for exploring the issues of personal power and leadership. Arrien has studied diverse shamanic traditions and found that all are based on four archetypes which promote harmony and balance with our environment and our inner nature. In her book, *The Four-Fold Way*, Arrien outlines the major universal experiences as follows:

1) Show up. Choose to be present. This allows us to access the human resources of power, presence and communication. This is the way of the Warrior.

2) Pay attention to what has heart and meaning. This means being open to the human resources of love, gratitude, acknowledgment, and validation. This is the way of the Healer.

3) Tell the truth without blame or judgment. Nonjudgmental truthfulness maintains our authenticity, and develops our inner vision and intuition. This is the way of the Visionary.

4) Be open to outcome, not attached to outcome. Openness and nonattachment help us recover the human resources of wisdom and objectivity. This is the way of the Teacher.

Arrien's research about the universal nature of power is particularly relevant for leaders. She defines three kinds of power: the power of presence, the power of communication, and the power of position. According to Arrien, being present means bringing forward our mental, emotional, spiritual and physical resources—choosing to be "all there" instead of caught up in day dreams or past problems. Powerful communication means communicating effectively in terms of content, timing and context—assuring congruity between words and behavior. For Arrien, the power of position does not refer to one's place in an organizational hierarchy; it means the capacity to let others know what we stand for.

Tending Our Gardens

Each of us provides leadership in some aspects of our life–on the job, at home or in the community. Although the degree of influence we have may depend on organizational structures, historical relationships, economics and other factors, we all have some opportunities to exercise leadership. Our community access centers provide the perfect arena to practice our own leadership skills and to help other leaders grow. For the community media field, developing grassroots leadership is the foundation for building healthy organizations, strengthening our communities, and influencing public policy at the local, state and national levels. This is the work of tending our own gardens, one small act at a time.

Paula Manley is the Executive Director of Tualatin Valley Community Access, a nonprofit community media center serving 16 communities west of Portland in Oregon's Tualatin Valley.

What Do Leaders Do?

Model Behavior...

Behavior speaks louder than words. Being a model is the core of leadership.

Elicit the Thinking of Others...

No one can do all the thinking for a group! Part of the leader's job is to elicit and integrate the best thinking from all members.

Encourage Others to Develop Leadership Skills...

You can never have too many leaders. Encouraging and training others is an important function of being a leader.

Inspire Confidence...

It is the leader's job to inspire, inform and reassure people that situations can be improved; it is possible to make change.

Promote Learning...

The leader is a designer, a social architect, who actively promotes a culture of inquiry and exchange where people are able to develop their abilities.

Build Shared Vision...

A leader holds a shared picture of the future a group wants to create and fosters commitment to work toward that vision.

Tell the Truth...

Leaders have a commitment to the truth, not as an absolute final word, but as a willingness to continually root out the ways we all limit and deceive ourselves.

Report From the Field

Community Media Leadership Institute Renews Spirits, Builds Skills

by Paula Manley

As community media practitioners, we can all benefit from taking the time to re-charge our batteries, sharpen our skills, connect with the rich community development heritage of our field, and focus on our growth as leaders. The Community Media Leadership Institute, held at a retreat center in the lush foothills of Oregon's Cascade Mountains in October of 1997, provided an opportunity to do just that.



Participants in the 1997 Community Media Leadership Institute (back row left to right) Cyrille Phipps, Miguel Huarcaya, Denise Tanguay, Susie Aufderheide, Fernando Moreno, Linda Tomassi, (middle row) Deb Vinsel, Alison Hardin, jesikah maria ross, Julie Reifel, Paul Congo, Eric Zipf, Anne Mitchell, Rick Jungers, (bottom row) Linda Iannacone, Paula Manley. Not pictured: Todd Samusson.

The five-day Institute brought community media activists from six states together in an intensive learning environment. A bond developed quickly among the group as attendees shared their personal stories, motivations and struggles as community media workers. Participants viewed and discussed segments of videos from their own access centers as well as films and videos made nearly 30 years ago as part of the Canadian Film Board's *Challenge for Change* project, the initiative that inspired the birth of the U.S. public access television movement. Other sessions addressed adult learning principles, learning styles, and small group communication fundamentals.

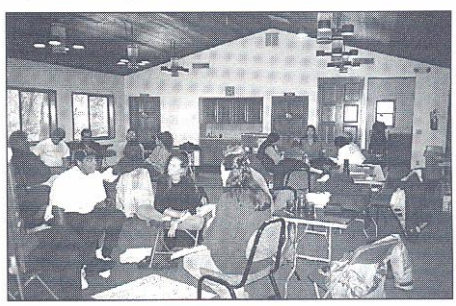
The Institute provided participants with an opportunity to explore the potential of access centers as catalysts for empowerment and community-building. Working in small groups and drawing from their own experiences, they explored the topics of power, community and leadership. Vision Teams spent time designing the community media center of the future. Juding by their group presentations, in coming years we will see thriving community centers that are catalysts for public dialogue, cultural exchange and lifelong learning.



A graffiti wall, shown here in its early stages, provided a focal point for the artistic impulses of Community Media Leader-ship Institute participants. Pictured are (left to right) Alison Hardin, Denise Tanguay, Miguel Huarcaya, Eric Zipf and Deb Vinsel.

A highlight of the Institute came on the fourth day when the group hiked the stunning Trail of Ten Waterfalls. What was intended as a break from the intensity of the indoor sessions became another lesson in leaderhship. The group shared a sense of wonder and exploration, and individuals took turns in the roles of leading and "sweeping" the rear to make sure no one was left behind. At the end of the day, the clouds parted to reveal a spectacular double rainbow.

"The community we created in our days together was very special. There was an enriching energy in the group. It was a safe environment where we could communicate openly...," said Deb Vinsel, Thurston Community TV's Executive Director, adding, "I found encouraging, fresh perspectives and ideas that helped me break some self-imposed limits about what community access is or should be. I returned to TCTV with new ideas about the community development way of looking at Access that really refreshed my career."



Community Media Leadership Institute participants worked in small groups to explore their assumptions about leadership and their own strengths and challenges as leaders.

Attendees from the following community media centers participated in the 1997 Institute: Community Access TV of Boulder, Capital Community Television, Santa Fe Community TV, Manhattan Neighborhood Network, Rogue Valley Television, Quote...Unquote, Tualatin Valley Community Access, Thurston Community Television and Multnomah Community Television.

Paula Manley is one of the founders of the Community Media Leadership Institute along with Todd Samusson and jesikah maria ross.

Community Media Leadership Institute 1998

The 1998 Community Media Leadership Institute will be held Nov. 7-11 at Oregon's Silver Falls State Park Conference Center. The Institute is a project of The Learning Commons, an educational nonprofit organization. For more information contact Paula Manley at (503) 629-8534 Ext. 105 or pmanley@teleport.com.

Collaborations & Partnerships

Yours, Mine and Ours

by Ginny Berkowitz
Director of Development &

Susan Fleischmann
Executive Director,
Cambridge Community Television

While "collaboration" and "partnership" became funding community buzz words in the early '80s, nonprofits have been using these tactics to carry out our missions since our beginnings. The shift among funders to require this type of program development has certainly formalized the practice of sharing resources, but creating collaborations is truly an art. Like a good painting you must brush in the details for work with accuracy and purpose.

Why Collaborate?

A good reason to collaborate is because funders now require it! But with scarce resources, forming partnerships is essential for non-profits to meet our missions. Collaboration can add zing to a project, as another organization's energy complements and inspires your own. Specifically, access centers collaborate to: increase their base of community support for public access; increase the impact of limited resources; provide creative ways for new users to get involved.

Access centers often lack the resources to provide tailor-made programming for organizations or particular communities (such as linguistic minorities, youth, and seniors) that would not otherwise become involved in access activities. Partnering with organizations that already serve those constituencies builds upon their expertise and experience, and more fully utilizes our own.

Models of Collaborations

From the start, ask: what are your expectations? What are their's? Know what you're good at, and avoid overextending yourself and your organization. There is a continuum of involvement regarding administration, management and funding; program development and content; and responsibility for constituents. Some models include:

▲ *Access Center as Resource*–In a traditional access model, we provide the facilities, equipment, and training expertise, the partner is responsible for project management and content. What distinguishes this from typical access usage is that access center staff help structure the training and production model to meet the needs of the partner and its constituents.

▲ *Access Center as Equal Partner*–Compatibility of missions is most important in this model, as the project requires equal contributions and shared desired outcomes.

▲ *Access Center Initiated and Sustained*–This process is initiated when a need is identified by access center staff, such as lack of programming for a particular constituency or a need for skill development for those who do not have access to emerging communications technology.

Choosing Collaborators

Don't underestimate the importance of personal compatibility in a professional partnership. Make sure your partner's need can be met through what your center has to offer. Then make sure that both organizations have:

▲ Clear and compatible missions;

▲ A history of successful project management and active constituencies; and

▲ A financially and programmatically viable project that meets an explicit community need.

"Each collaboration, whether ultimately deemed a success or failure, teaches us something new, creates new relationships, mutates in unexpected and surprising ways, and develops our capacity to meet the need for public access to communications technology."

Constructing the Collaboration

Program development is an often misunderstood art. Having an idea and making it happen takes both skill and a little magic. Bringing all the pieces together requires sound research and analysis of resources and problems; specific issue identification as informed by constituents; careful development of an action plan (in this case the collaborative plan); and solid evaluation. Some of the basics:

▲ *Establish Goals for the Collaboration*–Once a specific issue is 'cut' from the problem statement, an action plan must be developed that really hones in on how to have an impact on this issue. What do we really want to do to try and meet this need?

▲ *Develop the Program Concept*–How do we meet this need? What are the specific objectives and what strategies will help us meet our objectives?

▲ *Secure Funding and Other Available Resources*–Grant writing , creative liberation of funds already budgeted for related activities, and community and business sponsors can all be funding sources. Remember, in-kind donations are not just for meeting funder match requirements but can substantially increase your ability to carry out the project. But in-kind donations can't always carry the project without some cold, hard cash. Don't over extend your own resources!

▲ *Expectations and Roles of Collaborators*–What do we expect to achieve? Who will be responsible for different aspects of the project in working to achieve these outcomes?

▲ *Develop and Implement the Program*–Here you'll need some community organizing to accomplish the tasks inherent in a successful project. Nothing short of thoughtful outreach, leadership development, constituent empowerment, and successful completion of the desired product will do.

▲ *Evaluation*–Program development is a process that poses an action plan, gets a response, and creates a new plan. Evaluate the project from its inception; in each step; at certain plateaus; and at the conclusion. While this often happens intuitively throughout our work, some formal evaluation is helpful to inform best practices for future efforts, and is important to funding efforts. Involve all

collaborators, staff and constituents. Written and anecdotal information can be gathered to measure participation, knowledge, attitude and behavior changes; and to evaluate whether or not participants liked the program as it was designed and implemented and what they would change.

Examples of CCTV's Collaborations
Access Center as Resource: YMCA

This proposed project will provide video production and media literacy training to a community-based after school program serving primarily low- and moderate-income families. Based on a pilot collaboration of a live youth news program on our *BeLive* set, the YMCA is seeking funding, with assistance from CCTV, primarily to pay for services that CCTV will provide. The YMCA will receive high quality, interesting activities for its existing after school program; CCTV will provide trainers, facilities and equipment, and will help structure project activities.

We have always wanted to work with the YMCA, a neighbor of ours in Central Square serving an important constituency. Their new after school program provides a good opportunity for involvement. A successful collaboration will depend on the partnership's ability to raise money for staff and equipment use as well as careful program development with realistic goals for middle-school participants.


SUSAN FLEISCHMANN

Participants on CAST program



SUSAN FLEISCHMANN

Participants in a YMCA collaboration

Equal Partnership:
Family Literacy Project

This project provides computer literacy training to linguistic minority parents with pre-school children, and their teachers. The Center for Applied Special Technologies (CAST) chose to partner with CCTV to replicate a previously piloted program. CAST provides curriculum and funding, Cambridge Headstart and the Bilingual Ed program of the Cambridge Public Schools provide links to families and teachers, CCTV provides staffing, facility and administrative support.

The choice of partners was in part dictated by the CAST model, and not necessarily a good fit for us. The project is somewhat driven by the high priority placed on the research value of this pilot. These obstacles aside, we have been able to use this project to: provide a vital service for linguistic minorities, new immigrants, and individuals with low-literacy skills; develop a family literacy model for our computer center; and create a new network of users for CCTV. We are currently seeking funds to continue this project in a way that will also provide core staffing for computer Central.

Access Center Initiated and Sustained: Media Arts Education Program

Based on an overwhelming volume of requests to provide services to Cambridge youth, and the inclusion in the Massachusetts 1993 Educational Reform Act of media arts requirements in the curriculum, CCTV initiated a comprehensive youth program. Including in-school and after school components, this far-reaching initiative has included multiple collaborators, funders, and community leaders. The project operated successfully with local foundation, public, and corporate support for three years, until August, 1997. Since then, we have integrated components of the project into general public access activities.

One obstacle was the lack of focus and direction from one of the primary collaborators, the Cambridge School Department. In the process of engaging the schools' administration, we have evaluated our methods, and revised our plans. Progress has been made, and a new administration has responded enthusiastically to our current proposal of teacher training for 5th/6th graders city-wide. Future success of the Media Arts Education Program will depend on the growth of this relationship and our ability to continue and expand collaborations with area youth service providers.

Try It, You'll Learn Something

Each collaboration, whether ultimately deemed a success or failure, teaches us something new, creates new relationships, mutates in unexpected and surprising ways, and develops our capacity to meet the need for public access to communications technology.

Collaboration can move us forward in meeting our goals for building community through media. Go forth and collaborate!

A Unique New York Travelogue

The Mighty Media Mogul Tour

by Linda Iannacone

A visitor to Times Square last October would have spied a classic red double decker tour bus bounding across 34th Street on its way to Broadway. A fairly typical sight, were it not for the passengers' chants that could be heard from blocks away: "Corporate Media has got to go!" This particular bus, adorned with banners reading "Free the Media," carried dozens of activists from the second annual Media & Democracy Congress to meet hundreds of other people for a unique demonstration: *The Media Mogul Tour*, organized by the New York Free Media Alliance (NYFMA).

A Coalition Effort

The New York Free the Media Alliance (NYFMA) is a coalition of area media activists and organizations, including Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, Paper Tiger TV, and Steal This Radio. NYFMA was formed as a public outcry against media monopolies. *The Media Mogul Tour* served to accomplish a key NYFMA goal: a coalition for media change involving media makers, labor, environmental, and civil rights groups. A representative from the National Association of Broadcast Employees & Technicians helped gain participation by communication workers who were on strike against ABC (Disney) at the time. Also involved was the Nicaraguan Solidarity Network, publishers of *Weekly Update on the Americas*, a newsletter of stories from much-ignored Latin America. Also participating was Envirovideo, which has been exposing NBC parent company General Electric's involvement in the Cassini space probe and its serious potential for a plutonium disaster. Members of the Bread & Puppet Theatre group as well as local art students were enlisted to provide some visual impact as evidenced on signs which spoofed the ABC's sarcastic print advertising. After all, "Its the Media Stupid."

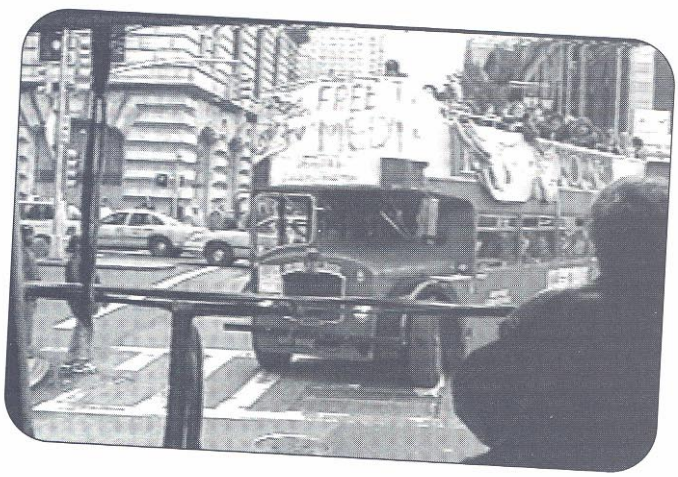


Takin' It to the Streets

The *Mogul Tour* coincided with the Media & Democracy Congress, allowing for the participation of students, academics and media professions from around the country. Led by Bread & Puppets' 15-foot tall media hound and pack of pup journalists and photographers, the tour marched to the headquarters of major media conglomerates for rallies with speakers, music and the presentation of NYFMA media-freeing demands in a "corporate subpoena." Along the way, thousands of people were given flyers outlining the power and reach of the major media conglomerates and the threat to democracy.

The tour's first stop was Viacom, parent to MTV, Paramount and Blockbuster. Viacom has created a youth market by encouraging consumerism as, of all things, rebellion. Countering the MTV world view, youth organizer Marisa Vural responded, "The Real World is not my world." Next stop was Times Square, now referred to as Disney Square with the company's purchase of numerous buildings in the area. Outside the enormous Disney Store, which sells thousands of products made in child-labor sweatshops around the world, the crowd waved signs that read, "Mickey says, 'Get back to work, kid'".

Many of the issues raised at the demonstration have roots directly in the Telecommunications Act of 1996. While the public access community has been excited over its "win" against the Decency Act and for allocation on the direct broadcast spectrum, the law has provided an environment for consolidation, cross-company synergies and greater commercialization of our information resources. Media Mogul Tour(ist)





Robert McChesney points out that "What we see in the 10 largest media firms in the US is an extremely high degree of joint ventures. Time Warner is partners with six of the nine firms that they are ostensibly competing with."

The Telecommunications Act claims that media outlets should be stewards of the community interest. When the Mogul Tour stopped at CBS Black Rock office tower, Karl Grossman (Environvideo) had this to say about its parent company. "Westinghouse is number one in the production of nuclear power plants worldwide. In the Philippines, Westinghouse was charged with bribing an official of the Marcos regime to build a nuclear power plant on the side of a volcano beside an earthquake fault on the Bataan Peninsula."

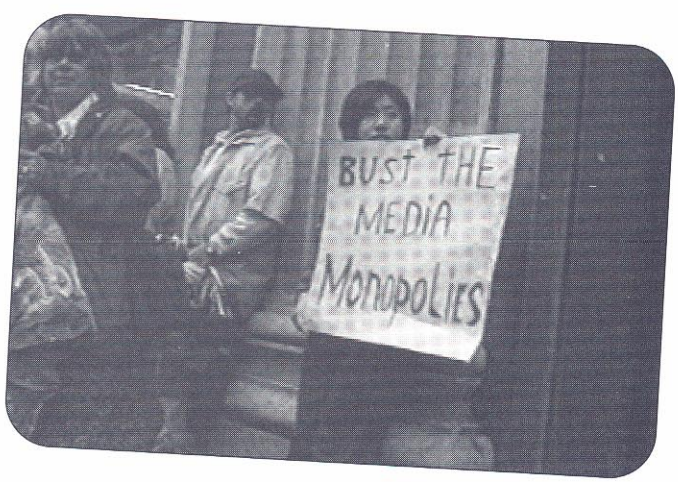
In the lively spirit of agit-prop street theater the Media Mogul Tour wound its way through the steel and glass towers of mid-town Manhattan. Jesse Hirsch, of the Toronto Media Collective, called for immediate overthrow of media conglomerates. A lofty goal, yet the access community can and should play a part in raising these issues for public debate. Public access is not served by the consolidation of media companies whose philosophy of greed runs antithetical to the public access ideal of free speech, community development and social change.

At present, public access television is not even a slice of the media pie–it's a crumb. Access centers are uniquely positioned to raise issues of media ownership, access, and use. *The Media Mogul Tour*, the coalition building efforts of NYFMA, and the corporate subpoena are tactics which can be replicated in other parts of the country to continue the work of pointing out the dangers posed by media monopolies.











Learning is Part of the Process

Community Video Training in Challenge for Change

by Dorothy Todd Hénaut

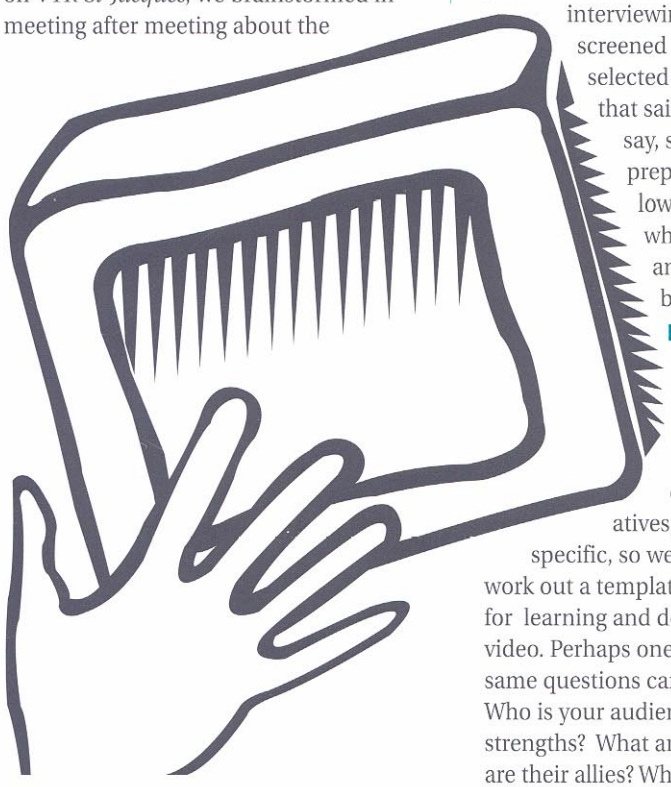
Rather than "training", I like to use the word "mentoring". I believe that media people need training and mentoring in community organizing, and that community activists need mentoring in the media. Each has something to learn from the other.

Reflecting on Challenge for Change

In the *Fogo Island Project*, which inspired all of our subsequent work, the ground rules were laid down: the people on the screen controlled their image and the use of their image, and the professional filmmakers were at their service, in tandem with a community development worker. When we started our first community video project — *VTR St-Jacques* — we resolved to get rid of the middlemen, the filmmakers, and to put video cameras directly in the hands of citizens.

The big challenge in doing community video is not learning to shoot and edit with competence, it's learning to imagine how it can be used to help the community. Working with a citizens' committee on *VTR St-Jacques*, we brainstormed in meeting after meeting about the possible uses of the equipment as a tool in the community's organizing, a terrific exercise in creativity and imagination. Some of the discussions we taped, sending the camera around the circle from hand to hand as we talked. That gave people the double experience of shooting from behind the camera and seeing themselves on camera. It also gave videographers empathy for the people they were taping, made folks more aware of the ethical use of the images, and boosted their self-esteem.

If you take all the time and do all the work to make a video or TV program, how will it be used? In *VTR-ST-Jacques* and other *Challenge for Change* projects we started by asking: Who is my audience, and what do I want them to do? Then it all of a sudden becomes obvious who you shoot, what you want to observe them doing, and what questions you want to ask them. We never made "scenarios" for our videos, but we did make detailed lists of what we wanted to cover, and from them created a shooting schedule, dividing the group into two-person teams who shared the shooting/interviewing duties. Then we screened the footage together, selected the bits that worked, that said what we wanted to say, structured them, and prepared a paper edit, followed by a video edit, which sometimes stood, and sometimes had to be revised.



Each Project Was Unique

We found that every *Challenge for Change* project evolved its own imperatives, and was extremely specific, so we never attempted to work out a template or universal method for learning and doing community video. Perhaps one could say that the same questions came up time and again. Who is your audience? What are their strengths? What are their problems? Who are their allies? Who should they try to reach to bring about necessary changes? How does our organization hope to affect their thoughts and their actions? Will this video or TV program be a good discussion starter and will it build bridges?

Other questions of dire importance were: How much time have we got to put into video or community TV, and would a radio show or a newsletter be more effective with less time and effort? And who could help us make a video or TV show so that we don't get too diverted from our community organizing? Another question is: Will people end up talking about the show, or will it inspire them to talk about their lives? Every circumstance was different, so different answers and new questions kept coming up. The basic, underlying question was: How will this media project impact the community?

Specific Challenges of Community Television

Community television is increasingly important as the media landscape around us proves itself to be a commercial wasteland and a distraction from democracy. One of its problems is that sometimes large chunks of your audience aren't even cabled. The other is that TV programs are viewed in isolation. I would like to see community organizations set up viewing centres where citizens could get together and discuss the programs that are being made. I would certainly like to see community television producers have an opportunity to be in a room with their audience, to listen to them breath and laugh and cry and debate for hours afterwards.

I would like to send my warmest wishes to all of you who are mentoring people in community video and using media to make a difference in your communities. I can't think of anything more important to do to keep democracy alive.

Dorothy Todd Hénaut is a film/videomaker and social activist who lives in Montreal, Quebec. She worked with the National Film Board of Canada for the past 29 years and was a Regional Projects Producer in Challange for Change. *She can be reached at: tel: (514) 276-5333 or dorothyh@web.net*

Making Letters & Phone Calls Effective

Tips on Influencing Elected Officials & Policymakers

20/20 Vision actions focus on communicating your thoughts and ideas to your elected officials and other policy makers. Writing letters and making phone calls are simple and effective ways to change policy.

Policy makers do pay attention – and change their minds and votes – when even a moderate number of constituents contact them on a single issue within a short period of time. Here are a few tips on how to make your actions have the greatest impact.

When You Write:

The more personal your letter is, the more influence it has. Say what's on your mind and in your heart. Use your own words wherever possible, but don't think you have to write like an expert to have influence.

Hand write your letter if your handwriting is legible. Mass computer sophisticated that it often looks like it's done by an individual. Handwritten letters are now the only way that a congressional office knows that the letter really comes from an individual constituent. If you prefer to type a letter, make sure you sign it and then add a handwritten P.S.

It's best to be brief, clear and specific. Keep your letter to one page if possible. State your opinion and your specific request within the first few sentences. Ask the policy maker to state her or his position in a response letter. Be courteous and reasonable. Show respect for the policy makers you contact, even when you disagree with them. Include your address on your letter – an envelope can get lost.

When You Call:

When calling legislators, it is best to try to speak to their arms control or environmental aide. If they are not available, leave your name, address and a clear message with the person who answers the phone. You might begin by saying, "I'm Jane Doe calling from Anytown, and I'd like to leave a message for Congressperson Smith." State what issue you are calling about and what you want your legislator to do. You can ask for a written response to your message. Don't be intimidated. You don't have to be an expert to tell policy makers the priorities you think they should pursue. If you are calling or emailing an official, you may want to follow up with a letter as well!

Some Optional Enhancements:

▲ Describe briefly how the policy or legislation in question affects you personally or affects people where you live.

▲ Enclose an article that has bearing on the policy or legislation in question.

▲ If you have any personal association with the policy maker, let her or him know. Nothing is more effective in getting a policy maker's attention than letting them know you've worked on her or his campaign.

▲ Use your business or organization letterhead stationery if you have any.

▲ Legislators have informed us that phone calls and letters carry equal weight.

▲ In general, try to avoid sending letters by fax. Many congressional offices find a fax intrusive and prefer letters that arrive by mail.

▲ Write or call a second time. Follow-up letters can have a much stronger impact on policy makers and their aides than the initial communication. Thank the legislator for taking a correct stand or ask questions about any unsatisfactory answers they have given you.

A Sample Letter

When you write to a Member of Congress, an official in the Administration, or any other decision maker, use a formal style for your letter. Make it personalized, localized and let them know exactly what you think they should do. Below is a recommended format:

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State Zip

(On letterhead stationery if possible).
Hon. (The full name and title of your policy maker)
Their address
Their City, State, Zip

Dear Senator or Representative (their name),

Briefly state your main point or opinion.

Write about your personal concerns and views. Use facts to back up your position.

Close with a strong statement. "Please let me know how you will vote on this important issue. I will take your position into consideration at the next election."

Sincerely,
Your signature
Your name

P.S. - Include a hand written postscript, especially if you didn't hand write your letter.

Editor's note: This article is reprinted with permission of 20/20 Vision, a nonprofit organization committed to generating grassroots support for critical issues of peace, justice, and environment. For more information, contact:

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Next 20 Years...

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public space in electronic media?

This situation creates a dilemma for some Alliance members. How do we provide community channels, equipment and training on a nondiscriminatory basis while advocating a position of our own and aligning with groups of our choice? We do so in order to continue to have the channels, equipment and training available for the broad-based set of groups and individuals who will have little to no access to electronic media if we are gone.

Community-Building, Public Space and Community Media

For community media to succeed we need to recognize that we are part of the movements that build communities and that created community media. Many members of these movements have formed the backbone of program providers. Their work isn't done. Neither is ours. They need media for their voices. We need the strength of many voices for community media to grow across the country. We both understand the need for public space and the need to build our communities. It's time to rekindle the partnership.

The Campaign for Media Democracy

It took years to create community media. It will take years to secure our future. If we succeed, in 20 years we will be talking about our work to secure the next 20 years. Working to carve out and protect public space is always an uphill climb. We will need to take steps. We'd like to leap to a great federal mandate, but that is not possible. And as in 1984, a single federal law can wipe out the gains of a decade.

Community media in the next 20 years has the potential to be the best of the past and the present. Our centers across the nation have resources, experience and legions of trained volunteers unimagined 25 years ago. We have the ingredients. Though we're all busy, if we gather around a few key concepts and coordinate the work already being done, we can succeed just like those who founded community media.

That's why we are forming a *Campaign for Media Democracy*. And the campaign will be strong and successful because we and those in other community-building movements will build this campaign together.

BIG...

continued from page 8

1998, and around $200 billion is being spent on U.S. advertising overall. Television increasingly appears marinated in advertising and commercialism. As one advertising industry observer put it: "It should be noted that advertising clutter isn't confined to paid advertisements. From talk show hosts plugging their books to race car drivers wearing sponsor logos over every body part, clutter is everywhere." This commercial deluge is taking a toll. By one study, consumer "believability" in advertising dropped from 61 percent to 38 percent between 1987 and 1997.

The solution to the current problem of U.S. media demands political debate and reform. The reforms needed to democratize media in the United States would go directly against the corporate current. These include:

▲ applying antitrust to lessen or eliminate media concentration, vertical integration and conglomeration;

▲ establishing a fully funded and democratically accountable nonprofit and noncommercial radio and television sector, with local, regional and national stations and networks which would also provide the foundation for a public sphere in cyberspace;

▲ reinstating viable regulation of commercial broadcasters using the public airwaves, such as eliminating advertisements on children's and news programs;

▲ supporting any number of other measures to create a bolder and more aggressive journalism, including mechanisms to increase the power of working editors and journalists over the content of news rather than having those decisions ultimately be the province of investors, managers and advertisers; and, most important,

▲ establishing fully open, wide-ranging public hearings on the future of U.S. media. This means replacing the appal-ling Telecommunications Act of 1996.

If in the future the United States makes having democratic media a priority, study and debate could probably determine a provocative range of reforms and alternatives that we debate and from which we could choose. At present, media control and support for a truly democratic public media system are not on the political agenda. This is the immediate core problem—the problem that is nowhere being addressed, much less solved.

Robert W. McChesney is an Associate Professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has written extensively on corporate media issues.

Editor's Note: This article was submitted to CMR under the title "Those Naughty Corporate Media Should Be Spanked with a Wet Noodle."

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Do all human beings have the right to see, to hear, to speak, to communicate and to access information regardless of their life circumstances, their political or religious beliefs or their ability to pay? We say 'Yes!' If you agree with us, join. . .

The Campaign for Media Democracy

What you can do:

❒ *Sign the Petition in Support of Media Democracy*

❒ *Support the Public Policy program of the Alliance — become a Public Policy Affiliate or Council member*

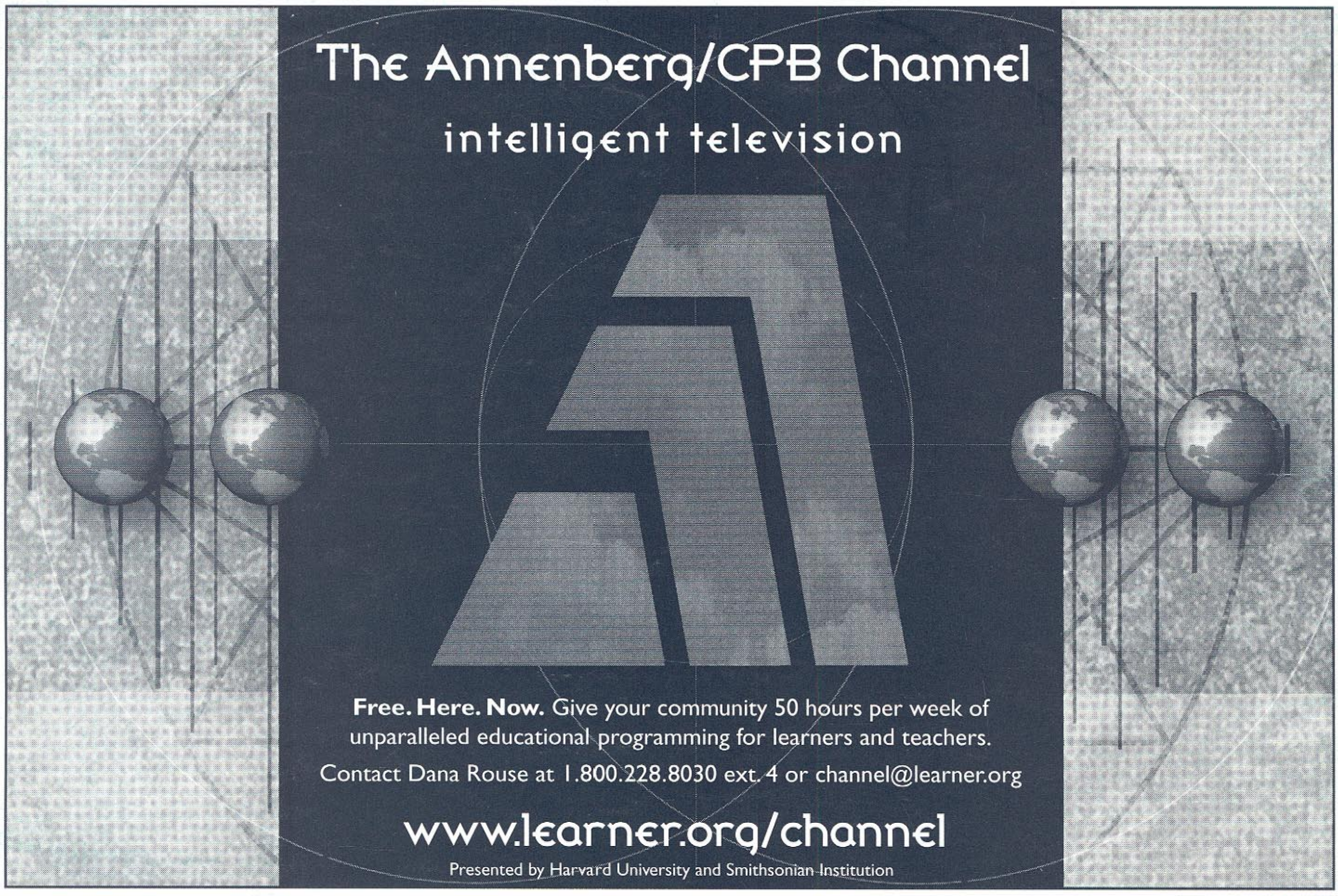
❒ *Write, call or visit your governmental representatives*

❒ *Write letters to the editor in support of media access or call in to a radio talk show and talk about the importance of media democracy*

❒ *Talk to your friends about the issue — speak to community groups or invite someone to speak to your group about media democracy*

❒ *Join an Alliance Chapter — Attend a Regional Conference — Become active in your Alliance!*

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